'She was the real deal'

Stars pay tribute to Dolly Parton

Life & Arts

The hottest ticket Would you go to the UK's first sauna theatre?

Page 3

The Guardian

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PM drops support for donations cap after lobbying from unions

Kiran Stacey
Policy editor

Andy Burnham has dropped his support for capping political donations, sparking anger among campaigners and Labour MPs who have long campaigned for major reform to the way parties are funded.

The prime minister has decided not to back amendments to next week's elections bill that would cap the amount that a person or organisation could give in a single donation, according to government sources.

The decision comes after a lobbying campaign from Labour's trade union backers, which warned the move could undermine their ability to donate to the party.

It also marks a retreat from the support he gave to the idea just a few weeks ago, when he emailed a campaigner for electoral reform to say he would support a donations cap of £500,000.

Stella Creasy, one of the Labour backbenchers who has tabled an amendment calling for a cap, said: "Millionaires are increasingly treating British politics as their plaything – splashing the cash to get the outcome they want and the next election as their cup final. The public won't forgive us if we miss this chance to clean up Westminster because we are squabbling with each other."

Shaun Bowler, the campaigner to whom Burnham promised his support in May, said: "Andy Burnham promised me a proper cap on political donations and a 'wholesale culture change' in Westminster. If his government now refuses to back a donations cap, then he has broken the promise he made to me – and to voters.

"I wanted to believe the positive message he gave me. I wanted to believe that someone was finally going to take on the culture that has left so many people feeling that their voices don't matter and that wealthy people can buy influence over our government.

"But words mean nothing if they disappear the moment power is won. Large political donations are not democratic. They create influence, whether

8

▲ *A woman rescued from a care home in Trishuli Bazar, Nepal. Many foreigners are among the missing*
PHOTOGRAPH: NARENDRA SHRESTHA/EPA

Hundreds feared dead in Nepal flash floods

Hannah Ellis-Petersen

More than 150 people had been confirmed dead last night and hundreds were missing after flash floods hit the Himalayan border areas of Nepal and Tibet in China, with officials saying areas of India were also at risk.

The disaster was caused by a torrent of mud, water and debris that burst from the banks of a river that runs between China and Nepal. Homes, roads, bridges and power plants were swept away in Nepal, while officials in Tibet said they feared "major casualties".

Officials in Nepal said 403 people, including 341 from other countries including India, the US, the UK, Australia, South Korea and Malaysia, had been reported missing in the country. Thirty-three British citizens are among those missing. The ages of the missing British citizens range from 13 to 65.

Police in Nepal said that 157 bodies had been recovered so far and more than 40 people were receiving treatment in hospital.

4

Meta to pay $17bn to end social media lawsuit

Blake Montgomery
Dara Kerr

Meta agreed to make significant changes to its Instagram and Facebook apps in a settlement that ended a landmark lawsuit yesterday.

Dozens of US states had accused the technology company of addicting and harming children with dangerous products.

The settlement, which curtails a major trial in California, will require the social media company to pay up to $17bn (£12.5bn). Meta agreed to set up safeguards for teenagers, including daily usage limits and blocks on night-time use across the US.

This is the first time that Meta has been forced to change key features for everyday users in the US.

The jury trial, which took place in a federal court in Oakland, began with opening statements just last week.

California and 28 other states had sued the $1.36tn company over allegations that it deliberately designed addictive products that hooked young people, leading to mental health problems including anxiety, depression and suicide.

The states also claimed

6

Inside *27/08/26*
Four sections every day

News and Sport

Health
Shingles vaccine appears to cut the risk of heart attacks and strokes
Page 7

Journal
Opinions and ideas

An anti-Farage army exists. The question is how to deploy it
Aditya Chakrabortty
Page 1

Life & Arts
Features & interviews

How to spot a psychopath
'It's like the difference between a domestic cat and a wild cat'
Page 4

Save up to 36% with a subscription to the Guardian and the Observer
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Weather
Page 34

Quick crossword
Back of Life & Arts

Cartoon
Journal, page 4

Cryptic crossword
Back of Journal

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More help with utility bills 'not likely' before new price cap

Gas and electricity prices will rise by 4% from October under the latest energy price cap
PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY/PA

Jessica Elgot
Jillian Ambrose

Households are unlikely to receive further energy bills support before the October price cap, though more targeted measures could be looked at if there is a further shock in January, government sources said.

Gas and electricity prices will rise by 4% from October under the new cap, though VAT is being removed from domestic electricity bills to save average households £45 a year, in a move announced during Andy Burnham's first week in office.

Prices had previously climbed 13% at the start of July to take account of global energy market price rises caused by the US war on Iran and the closure of the strait of Hormuz.

Burnham said yesterday that rising energy bills were "difficult for people and I recognise that" but stopped short of promising intervention beyond the VAT cut.

Miatta Fahnbulleh, the energy secretary, said bills were being driven up by the Iran war and that the government would "keep looking at what more we can do to protect families from unaffordable bills".

The chancellor, John Healey, said yesterday that the government would take a view again towards the end of the year if more support was needed. "No government can stop the squeeze felt by families and businesses with a global shock of this magnitude. It's being felt around the world. But we can keep close watch as we move towards the new year, and we remain focused on giving families a bit of breathing space with the cost of living," he told the Sun.

"We're a government that will look for practical action - working to put our country on a more resilient footing so we can better weather these shocks in future."

Burnham will continue his summer tour of the UK today with a stop in south Wales, promising to win back the trust of voters after historic losses for Labour in the May Senedd elections.

"The answers to the UK's challenges will not come from an echo chamber. They will come from the places that know their own strengths, and from a government willing to listen and then act," he said in advance of the visit.

The prime minister will spend the morning speaking to Welsh workers and apprentices, including about the cost of living and reindustrialisation, where the cost of energy is likely to be a key part of discussions.

The Resolution Foundation, a thinktank with close ties to the government, has suggested there should be targeted support that is designed, costed and ready to be introduced if needed from January 2027 - when bills have been forecasted to rise again by up to 9%.

The thinktank has said this should go beyond those on benefits and target those earning under £24,000 a year, reaching about 40% of households, with savings averaging £175 per eligible family.

"The rise in energy bills in October has been tempered but not avoided by the government's decision to reduce electricity bills for everyone through a VAT cut," said the foundation's chief executive, Ruth Curtice.

"With wholesale gas prices hitting new post-Iran highs in the past week, there is a real risk of further rises in January. Given the acute pressure on both family and government budgets, we need a better mechanism for targeted support ready to activate if needed."

The TUC has renewed its call for a windfall tax on bank profits to pay for a cut to bills. Its general secretary, Paul Nowak, said the government should be looking at ways now to fund more support for households this winter. "The government is going to have to keep going on measures to boost living standards - starting with a tax on banks' enormous profits to cut energy bills for the majority of households," he said.

"It's the right thing to do. Banks are raking it in while many up and down the country are struggling to get by - they can well afford to pay more tax."

The previous chancellor, Rachel Reeves, was preparing targeted support for energy bills before Burnham became prime minister. She told the Commons in March she wanted to "ensure that we are in a position in the autumn to have a targeted approach".

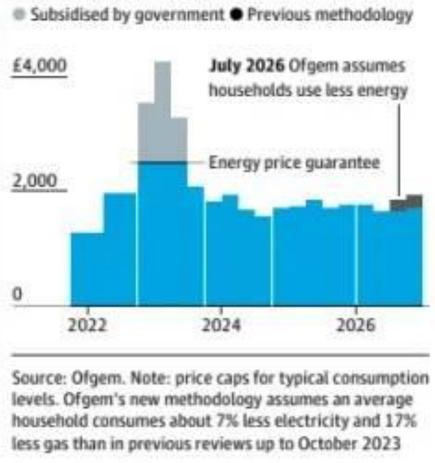
But government sources suggested that any further support would be costed in the budget and would wait to see how the conflict in the Gulf developed over the coming months - including whether the strait of Hormuz could be reopened.

Burnham has suggested he is open to allowing more drilling sites in the North Sea if a quasi-judicial process approves exploration of the Jackdaw and Rosebank fossil fuel sites.

That is likely to bring criticism from some Labour MPs, but in an interview with the FT, Burnham pointed to the "pragmatic approach" taken by green energy entrepreneur and climate campaigner Dale Vince, who recently backed both schemes on the BBC's Newsnight.

The former energy secretary and now foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, once called the Rosebank proposal "climate vandalism". Meanwhile, climate experts have warned the damage caused by developing the oil and gas fields would obliterate their economic benefits.

The energy price cap will increase by 4% from October



Source: Ofgem. Note: price caps for typical consumption levels. Ofgem's new methodology assumes an average household consumes about 7% less electricity and 17% less gas than in previous reviews up to October 2023

Plug-in solar panels go on sale in UK for first time today

Jillian Ambrose
Energy correspondent

Plug-in solar panels will go on sale in the UK for the first time from today, allowing households unable to use rooftop panels to also generate their own cheap electricity.

Households across the country will be able to join the millions across mainland Europe who generate their own renewable electricity using "balcony solar panels", which will be stocked by some of the UK's biggest retailers.

Argos will be the first to offer the DIY solar systems this week, helping people living in flats or rented homes without roof access to lower their bills by generating their own electricity.

The rival retailers Amazon, Currys, B&Q and Screwfix are also expected to stock their shelves with plug-in panels in the coming weeks, at prices starting from about £400 to £500 depending on the capacity of the system.

The devices are already popular in Spain and Germany, where they are known as *Balkonkraftwerke* (balcony power stations) because they can be plugged into a standard wall socket to generate solar power from a balcony, terrace, shed roof or any other outdoor space.

The solar power flows directly into the property's electrical circuit to power appliances without needing to buy as much from the grid. Each solar system must be registered so Great Britain's National Energy System Operator can gauge how the impact of these panels could cut the need for gas-fired power or imports.

In the UK the 800-watt solar systems due to go on sale will be about a fifth of the size of a typical residential rooftop solar set-up, meaning they are unable to provide enough energy to power a home, but they could save the average household up to £110 a year on their annual electricity bill.

Miatta Fahnbulleh, the energy secretary, said: "Plug-in solar is a simple, affordable way for households to take control of their energy bills and start saving straight away."

Graham Biggart, the managing director of Argos, said: "By making this technology more accessible, we're putting more power in the hands of our customers and helping them explore practical ways to manage energy use at home."

The savings possible from each solar system will depend on how much power is generated, which could be affected by the orientation of each solar panel and the weather on any given day.

£400
Expected starting price for plug-in solar panels, which are already popular in Spain and Germany

Savings will also depend on whether the household is able to use the electricity while it is being generated - perhaps by running washing machines or dishwashers during sunny spells - because plug-in batteries were not included in the new legislation allowing plug-in solar sales to begin.

Emily Seymour, the energy editor of the Which? group, said: "These smaller systems will generate less electricity than conventional rooftop solar and won't be suitable for every home. People may need planning permission before going ahead, so it will be important to check your circumstances before making a purchase.

"There are also important safety considerations, particularly around the suitability of older electrical systems, the safe mounting of panels and the potential for people to use products or equipment incorrectly."

Joanna O'Loan, a manager at the Energy Saving Trust, said: "While the savings will vary from home to home, plug-in solar panels will give more people greater control over their energy use and costs."

Fans sweat the small stuff at the hottest new theatre venue in Edinburgh

▶ *Fans enjoy the Sauna Theatre at the fringe's Summerhall venue, which can seat 80 people and puts on multiple performances*

PHOTOGRAPHS: VICTORIA HAYDN/ THERME MANCHESTER

Robyn Vinter

Tucked away behind the Summerhall arts centre is the hottest new venue at the Edinburgh fringe ... quite literally.

The Sauna Theatre has proven to be a hit among theatregoers at the world's largest arts festival, where shows inside a purpose-built 80-seat sauna have drawn sweaty, swimwear-clad crowds.

Visitors might be forgiven for thinking the sauna is a gimmick, especially at the fringe, where absurd, ludicrous performances are not uncommon - this year they include a man drinking his own urine, someone singing the same song over and over, physical feats of exertion and several fully naked shows.

But the show is more wholesome, especially regarding nudity, which is not allowed at the venue, co-founded by director James Grieve and designer Lucy Osborne.

Grieve said: "The idea really is to bring the sauna native art forms of *aufguss* [multi-sensory sauna ritual originating in Germany and Austria] together with more traditional forms of art and culture like theatre, literature, music, poetry, et cetera.

"We've done a lot of research over the last few years and art and culture in saunas proliferates the world over," he said. "There's a great tradition of storytelling, of folk music in saunas and then there's this incredible art form, *aufguss*, which is a sauna master infusing ice and water with essential oils and then placing the infusion on the sauna stave and circulating the fragrant steam with towel-waving choreography.

"And that's usually accompanied by music and also storytelling, costume, lighting, sound. It's basically a show in a sauna."

'Art and culture in saunas proliferates the world over'

James Grieve
Director, the Sauna Theatre

Deborah Carr, whose job when not at the fringe is training professional sauna masters, said: "In the UK, this is the first sauna theatre, but we see them around the world. From Japan to Germany to Italy, there is a sauna theatre that holds 320 people. So I think this is just emerging in the UK and seeing this here for the first time is really exciting because it then plants a seed and it starts us growing."

Inside are three tiers of wooden seating surrounding three stoves, which can heat the air to 90C, with professional quality stage lighting and a sound booth that is only slightly cooler.

Shows have built-in breaks - though audience members can leave at any point - and the braver ones can enter the cold plunge. Showers, mirrors and hairdryers make it more feasible for punters to go about their day afterwards.

The shows vary from morning raves to storytelling, theatre and music events. For example, Mysteries of the Picts, at noon every day, features *aufguss* from two sauna masters performed to traditional folk music.

The response has been "amazing", Grieve said. "I think one of the great joys is seeing people leave the space having had an experience that's made them feel better physically, emotionally. And that was something we really wanted to capture and harness. We really believe that art culture is good for you physically and mentally and that combined with sauna, maybe it becomes kind of exponentially good for you."

Carr added: "We see these lovely rosy cheeks and beaming faces as they go out. And then when people have come back, they've said, 'I just felt so amazing. Not only did I enjoy it, I felt great for the rest of the day'."

Murrell's downfall to be made into 'Shakespearean' TV drama

Tara Conlan

Channel 5 is reuniting with the producers of Power: the Downfall of Huw Edwards for a drama about how Nicola Sturgeon's estranged husband embezzled £400,000 from the Scottish National party and the impact it had on her reputation.

◀ *Nicola Sturgeon and Peter Murrell in 2016. They separated last year*

To Nicola, Love Peter will examine the couple's relationship over the 12-year period that Peter Murrell diverted funds from the SNP while he was its chief executive to spend on items including a £124,550 motorhome and more than £2,600 on a pair of salt and pepper grinders.

Murrell was arrested in 2023, and Sturgeon subsequently discovered that the man who helped build her career and with whom she shared her life had deceived and betrayed her.

After it emerged he had embezzled money to buy items such as a Jaguar SUV, Montblanc pens and luxury watches by falsifying invoices and using secret codes, he was jailed this summer for five years and three months.

Murrell's ability to take the funds is understood to have been obscured at the time by the SNP's heavy spending between 2010 and 2022. His conviction this year left Sturgeon, once a hugely popular first minister, with her hard-earned reputation in tatters. She revealed recently she had not spoken to him since he was jailed.

Channel 5 said To Nicola, Love Peter will lift "the lid on this extraordinary story and how it contributed to the downfall of one of the biggest political figures of a generation".

Making the announcement at the Edinburgh TV festival, the broadcaster and streamer's chief content officer, Ben Frow, said: "This is an epic tale of Shakespearean proportions. An extraordinary tale of power, envy, deception and greed ...

"We will be pulling together the events and characters involved to create a compelling, revealing drama ... as well as answering that very important question - why would anyone pay £2,000 for a pair of salt and pepper grinders?"

Flash floods in Nepal and Tibet leave scores dead and hundreds missing

Continued from page 1

Nepal's tourism board officials said more than 100 of those missing were religious tourists from India and the Indian diaspora on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in Tibet, a sacred site for Hindus. At least 62 missing Nepali citizens were among hundreds of locals trekking in Rasuwa, one of the worst-hit districts.

Keshav Prasad Baral, a 68-year-old survivor who was being treated at a small hospital, said: "It was a huge gush of mud coming straight towards us. As it got closer, it kept rising higher and higher.

"When I saw it enter our home, I tried to grab my wife's hand and take her to the terrace. But she was swept away by the mud. Four or five hours later, a helicopter came to rescue me. My wife is still somewhere beneath the mud. She's gone."

Experts were still determining the exact cause of the disaster.

An initial study of Planet Labs satellite imagery indicated that a landslide of ice and rock triggered a debris-laden flood in the Lhende River, about 12 miles north-east of the Nepal-China Rasuwagadhi border crossing, Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said on X.

Officials said the flooding could get worse because parts of the river remained blocked by ice rocks and debris. Flood alerts were also issued in the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which border Nepal and are downstream of the affected rivers.

Police in Nepal said they were still unable to assess the full scale of the damage. Rescuers said helicopters could not land in affected areas of Syapru Besi and Timure in the mountainous district of Rasuwa until the waters had receded. Rescue efforts were also hampered by heavy monsoon rains. Images of floating cars, a metal bridge being washed away, and villages engulfed by water, mud and debris were shown on Nepalese TV.

"There could be heavy casualties or loss of property," said the district administrator, Narendra Pariyar, who urged those on the banks of the Bhote Koshi to move to higher ground.

"There is devastation everywhere we look," said Tula Bahadur BK, a health worker in Rasuwa. "The settlements next to the river have been completely swept away. Five of my own relatives are missing."

"Entire villages and market areas have been wiped out," said David Fisher, the Nepal head of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Officials said power supplies had been hit, mostly as a result of destroyed hydroelectric plants.

Police and military officers had joined in the rescue, the prime minister, Balendra Shah, said. "Instructions have been given ... to move people living in the lower areas to safer places. People along the river are advised to exercise extra caution."

The Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, said he had spoken to Shah and offered Nepal "all possible types of humanitarian assistance". India sent an initial 10 tonnes of assistance, including blankets, solar lamps and medicines, officials said.

China's official Xinhua news agency said the flood occurred on the Nepalese side of the border and cut roads, communications and power links in the Shigatse region.

China was conducting search and

▲ *Homes are left covered in mud along a riverside after flash floods at Trishuli Bazar in Nepal's Nuwakot district*
PHOTOGRAPH: PRABIN RANABHAT/AFP/GETTY

> *'There is devastation everywhere we look. The settlements by the river have been swept away'*
> **Nepali health worker**

▼ *The moment the mudslide hits Gyirong Port, a land border crossing connecting China and Nepal*

PHOTOGRAPH: PIXEL8000

Typhoon Tens of thousands evacuated in south China

Reuters

Widespread flooding triggered by Typhoon Narra submerged homes and forced mass evacuations in southern China, as another storm system tracked towards Japan and Taiwan.

Authorities in Chongzuo in China's Guangxi region – famous for its giant waterfalls and karst limestone mountains – evacuated more than 15,000 people after water levels surpassed a record high set in 2008.

In Chongzuo, river water overflowed into the city, reaching the rooftops of some buildings and power lines. A notice from authorities on Monday ordered all businesses and tourist operations to cease and urged evacuated residents not to return to high-risk areas.

Rising flood waters have prompted China to relocate 54,000 people in Guangxi, state television said.

China's coastal areas and southern regions are preparing for several more days of intense rain. Narra made landfall as a tropical storm on Tuesday evening in the southern island province of Hainan after lingering over the Gulf of Tonkin for several days, leading to very heavy rain across Guangxi, Hainan and Guangdong.

Narra and the accompanying Typhoon Saudel, alongside tropical cyclones Gaenari and Atsani, form a rare quartet of storms swirling simultaneously across the northwest Pacific and South China Sea, according to China's Meteorological Administration.

Heavy rain is expected to persist in the south, even as recent downpours have already pushed rivers over warning levels and inundated low-lying areas in Guangxi.

Typhoon Saudel is forecast to make landfall along China's eastern seaboard between Zhejiang and Fujian provinces either today or tomorrow. Weather models project that its outer rain bands could extend back towards Guangxi.

Saudel swept across Japan's Okinawa prefecture yesterday morning, prompting weather agencies to issue warnings for destructive winds and high seas. As the storm moved west, it brought the Amami island chain in Kagoshima prefecture into its storm-force wind radius, leaving nearly 35,000 homes without power, according to Kyushu Electric.

Ninety-two flights serving airports across Okinawa were cancelled yesterday, while All Nippon Airways suspended all flights to and from Naha airport, the prefecture's main gateway.

Taiwan's Central Weather Administration said Saudel was tracking north of the island, where it was expected to gradually weaken and shrink in storm radius, bringing moderate rainfall to parts of northern and southern Taiwan until tomorrow.

◀ *Rescuers transport an elderly woman in Devighat, Nepal. Right, women gather outside a hospital in Nuwakot district, Nepal*

PHOTOGRAPHS: NARENDRA SHRESTHA/EPA

rescue operations in the Tibetan border area of Gyirong, according to the state broadcaster. President Xi Jinping urged "all-out" search efforts and better early warning systems to prevent secondary disasters.

The Himalayan region is particularly vulnerable to floods and landslides because it is warming faster than the rest of the world as a result of the climate crisis.

Research shows heatwaves and torrential rains have become more frequent. Nepal's snow-capped mountains had lost close to one-third of their ice in just over 30 years, the UN said in 2023. Experts have called for better early warning systems across the region.

Researchers in Kathmandu also found earlier this year that glaciers across the Hindu Kush region were melting at an accelerating rate. Ice loss rates have doubled since 2000.

Last year, a flood from the Bhote Koshi River killed nine people and washed away a "friendship bridge" linking Nepal and China, disrupting trade and transport for months.

Additional reporting **Reuters**

UK victims Girl, 13, among 33 Britons who are missing

Caroline Davies
Nadeem Badshah

Thirty-three British citizens, including a 13-year-old girl, are among more than 400 travellers missing after a flash flood in the Rasuwa district of Nepal, according to the country's tourism board.

The "sudden" flood happened on the Tibetan side of the Bhote Koshi River at about 8.30am local time yesterday.

The 33 UK citizens are among 341 foreign nationals unaccounted for.

Alpine Eco Trek, which offers guided tours and expeditions in Nepal, had earlier said that 12 British nationals on its tour across the Nepal-Tibet border were missing. Speaking to the Press Association (PA) from the affected area, Ram Kumar Adhikari, the owner of Alpine Eco Trek, wrote: "Not much info to share at the moment, but yes we have 12 British citizens [supposed] to make entry this morning."

The age of the missing British citizens ranges from 13 to 65, according to travel logs shared with PA.

More than 100 of those missing were yet to have a nationality confirmed, the tourist board added.

A wall of mud and rock appeared to collapse into a river on the Himalayan border of Nepal and Tibet, triggering catastrophic flooding on the Nepali side, Reuters reported.

It said verified videos showed dozens of people swept away at the border, with authorities on both sides fearing far higher casualties and huge destruction.

Houses, roads and power projects were swept away in Nepal, while officials in Tibet said they feared "major casualties", with some missing in the county of Gyirong after a mudslide hit a border crossing.

Initial reports suggested an earthquake had triggered an avalanche and caused the floods, Shisir Khanal, Nepal's foreign minister, told the country's parliament.

Eight South Koreans working on a hydropower plant were missing and 10 others were stranded, South Korea's foreign ministry said.

Local authorities said tourists in Rasuwa and other areas along the Bhote Koshi and Trishuli rivers should "exercise extreme caution", remain in safe areas and move to higher ground if required.

Visitors were urged to stay in regular contact with hotels and travel agencies. People travelling to the affected areas in the coming days were warned to postpone their journeys.

Ed Miliband, the UK's foreign secretary, said: "I am deeply concerned to hear of the flash floods on the Nepal-China border.

"All my thoughts are with those affected and with British nationals in the area and their relatives here at home."

The British embassy in Kathmandu urged people in affected areas to follow local advice.

Meta to add child safety features as part of $17bn legal settlement

Continued *from page 1*

the social media company regularly collected data on children under the age of 13 without parental permission in violation of federal and state laws.

As part of the settlement, the company denied wrongdoing.

"Today, we have secured a settlement with Meta that will make social media less dangerous for our kids and make a world of a difference for children and their families," said Rob Bonta, the attorney general of California. "Meta has agreed to make massive transformations that will reduce the risk of harm from its platforms – and will do it within months."

Bonta said the changes included time limits, stopping notifications during school, a block on the app during critical overnight hours, bans on plastic surgery filters and more.

The $17bn settlement will be divided between the 29 states over 10 years, subject to court approval. California would receive between $1.5bn and $2.1bn and Colorado would get about $615m.

"The relief we are getting in this settlement is very meaningful and well beyond what any court has ordered or is likely to order," said Phil Weiser, the attorney general for Colorado. "The focus of this case was to protect our kids."

Throughout the proceedings, Meta denied all the allegations, saying the claimant states were chasing an "outlandish payout".

Yesterday, Meta's chief legal officer, CJ Mahoney, said the settlement reached with the states would work only if all social media companies changed their platform designs.

"Because teens move fluidly across dozens of apps, we need an industry-wide solution. We therefore call on our industry peers, TikTok, Snap, and YouTube, to implement this new framework right away," Mahoney said in a statement.

"As a parent, I'm proud of both the work Meta has done to protect kids historically, and of this new groundbreaking agreement. But its success depends on all other social media platforms following Meta's lead."

Meta, YouTube, TikTok and Snap face thousands more US lawsuits brought by families, individuals, school districts and other attorneys general. Meta and YouTube lost the first of those cases to go to trial in February, being ordered to pay $6m to the young woman who brought the suit. TikTok and Snap settled before the case went to trial.

▲ *Mark Zuckerberg was listed as a witness before the trial was curtailed*

Two lawsuits that were slated to go to trial this summer, one federal and one in a California state court, were also settled for undisclosed sums.

Meta lost a separate case, brought against it by the attorney general of New Mexico, where it was ordered to pay nearly $1bn to that state for allowing child sexual exploitation on its social media platforms.

The trial in Oakland was expected to last for several weeks with dozens of witnesses scheduled to take the stand. Instead, there were only four days of proceedings.

Jurors first heard from the states' star witness, Arturo Béjar, a former Meta safety engineer turned whistleblower. He testified that the company had a "don't ask, don't tell" strategy when it came to the safety of children on its platforms.

Béjar claimed that Mark Zuckerberg, Meta's chief executive, was aware of the harms of Instagram and Facebook, but publicly touted the platforms' safety.

"I felt that he created a false and misleading impression of Facebook's commitment to young people," Béjar testified in the case.

Zuckerberg had been listed as a witness in the trial but did not get to testify before the settlement agreement was reached.

On Tuesday, questioning of Adam Mosseri, the Instagram chief executive, began with the lawyer for the states accusing the company of touting safety features for teenagers but not being forthcoming that young people do not generally use them.

When Mosseri was faced with multiple questions about not disclosing those low user numbers, Mosseri brushed them aside, saying: "We don't publish every single stat."

▲ *Adam Mosseri, the head of Instagram, was questioned over safety features at the trial in Oakland*

PHOTOGRAPH: MANUEL ORBEGOZO/ REUTERS

Analysis

Blake Montgomery

Forcing firm to make protection of teens its 'default' is a very public blow for the tech giant

The jury is still out on whether changes to Meta's social media apps will be powerful enough to alter teens' behaviour, but the settlement brought by 29 US states achieved what Congress couldn't: forcing a social media company to change its operations to protect children.

Meta's agreement to change how teenagers use its social networks is a major concession and sets a precedent others in the tech industry are likely to follow.

The social media giant agreed to significant alterations to Instagram and Facebook in a settlement that ended a landmark lawsuit yesterday. Dozens of US states had accused the tech giant of addicting and harming children with dangerous products.

The agreement curtails a major trial in California and will require the social media company to pay up to $17bn (£12.5bn) over a decade.

The nationwide measures set out by Meta in the settlement agreement are a powerful redirection from its previous opt-in approach to child safety. The company promised to establish safeguards for teenage users, including a daily usage limit of two hours of all Meta social networks for teen users, whose ages the company will be obligated to verify.

Other provisions include blocks on teenagers using social media at night from 12 am to 6 am, disabling notifications during school hours between 8am to 3 pm, and hiding like counts from them.

The settlement repeats again and again the word "default" when describing injunctive measures.

The amount of money is large in absolute terms but does not pose significant threats to Meta's business. The attorneys general had originally asked for $200bn, equal to the company's entire revenue in 2025. Meta's own yearly spending – $130bn this year alone – dwarfs the settlement amount.

The state attorneys general who brought the case are claiming victory, as are lawyers in other cases against Meta, stalwart tech critics, and advocates for child welfare.

The changes build on others Meta has introduced in recent years in response to concern over young people's wellbeing, including the introduction of dedicated teen accounts in 2024, a new product the company touted at the trial.

The amount of money is large in absolute terms but does not pose a significant threat to Meta, which spent $130bn this year alone

The attorneys general sued the company in 2023, and the company may have debuted Teen Accounts to avert disaster in court. By that token, Meta made real changes to its products as a result of the suit, and the attorneys general pushed the company to do more in their settlement agreement.

In a binary viewing, the settlement is a victory for the states. The attorneys general achieved their aim, forcing the company to take measures to protect young people.

The company is putting the agreement forward as a precedent for other social media companies to follow. Faced with new handicaps, it is cajoling competitors to adopt the same measures.

It may not have to do much convincing. California's attorney general indicated in a press conference that he and other states' lawyers were in talks with other social media companies about making similar changes.

Shingles vaccine appears to cut risk of heart attack and stroke

Hannah Devlin
Science correspondent

The shingles vaccine appears to significantly lower the risk of heart attack and stroke, according to scientists who say it could help prevent thousands of deaths each year.

The research, based on the health records of 70,000 people in the US, found that those who received Shingrix had a 12% lower risk of a cardiovascular diagnosis in the following three and a half years.

If confirmed, this benefit would be comparable to taking a daily blood-pressure-lowering medication.

Dr Maxime Taquet, a clinical lecturer at the University of Oxford who led the study, said: "If confirmed in clinical trials, vaccinating older adults against shingles could prevent hundreds of thousands of coronary heart diseases, strokes and cases of heart failure worldwide, making it one of the most impactful interventions we could offer to protect both the brain and the heart in later life. The effect might be enormous."

Shingles is a painful and serious condition caused by reactivation of the chickenpox virus, which stays dormant in the body after an infection. It can cause a rash and nerve pain that may persist for years after the rash clears, a complication known as post-herpetic neuralgia.

The first vaccine against shingles, Zostavax, was made available in 2006 and was based on a weakened version of the chickenpox virus. This was succeeded by Shingrix, which uses newer vaccine technology and is being made available incrementally to people aged 65-79 in a phased roll-out across the UK.

Research has suggested that vaccinated people may have a lower risk of cardiovascular disease. However, such studies compared vaccinated and unvaccinated people, leaving the results open to distortion. The new study got around this by comparing the incidence of cardiovascular disease in people who were vaccinated before and after the rapid switch from Zostavax to Shingrix in the US in 2017.

The researchers tracked the health records of 70,000 adults aged 60 and over for seven years after vaccination, which involved an initial dose and a booster. Shingrix was associated with a 12% reduction in cardiovascular events - including heart attacks, heart failure and stroke - in the first three and a half years after vaccination.

By the end of the follow-up, the vaccine was associated with a 4% lower risk of cardiovascular diseases, according to the study in Nature Medicine. While this represents a small change in absolute risk, the impact could be substantial given that heart disease and stroke are leading causes of death. "If confirmed in a [randomised controlled trial], the effect of Shingrix would be equivalent to antihypertensives," Taquet said.

12%
Decline in cardiovascular events, including heart failure, in the first 3.5 years after vaccination

Several trials are under way that could provide more definitive evidence. The scientists are also investigating why the vaccine may help to protect cardiovascular health.

One possibility is that shingles may increase the risk of heart and vascular diseases, so the more effective vaccine reduces this risk. Alternatively, the vaccine could be having broader effects on the immune system that suppress inflammatory proteins.

Dr Hugo Pedder, a research fellow in statistical modelling at the University of Bristol who was not involved in the study, said: "A randomised trial would be the best way to confidently answer whether recombinant vaccines do provide the benefits seen here versus live vaccines, but until such a trial is done this study provides some of the best-quality observational evidence supporting an effect of recombinant v live vaccines for cardiovascular outcomes."

Big dipper

Briton swims Swiss lakes in endurance challenge

Steven Morris

He staggered rather than sprang out of the lake, but it wasn't surprising.

Neil Gilson, a former international athlete, could be forgiven for feeling a little wobbly, having become the first person to swim the 10 largest lakes in Switzerland, a total of about 230 miles.

Over the past two summers, Gilson, a father of three from Devon, has ticked the lakes off and yesterday he finished swimming the 45-mile length of Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) in just over 22 hours.

His daughter Lily, 12, and 10-year-old son, Jack, were in the water waiting as he neared the shore to accompany him across the finishing line. "They swam the last 200 metres with me," Gilson said. "There were tears in my goggles. For the whole challenge, I was envisioning that moment. It kept me going through some difficult times - lovely."

Gilson, 40, was once ranked second in Britain for the 1500-metre freestyle and after finishing competitive swimming turned to endurance challenges. In 2024, he swam across Lac Léman in 22 hours and nine minutes, a world record. But it wasn't enough. He decided to tackle 10 Swiss lakes.

There have been blips. He says a swim of about 40 miles in Lake Maggiore this summer almost broke him. It was colder than he anticipated and he had to swim more quickly to get his core temperature up, which meant using more energy than planned. He had "nothing left" for the last few miles.

Gilson said he found swimming in lakes more demanding than the sea. "They're more unpredictable. You can get some really choppy conditions because of the wind and you can hit walls of cold water."

He began Léman on Tuesday morning and finished yesterday lunchtime. He said at 18 hours into the swim he thought of giving up. "I felt really close to stopping, but what kept me going was my family waiting there," he said.

As well as doing the swim as a huge challenge, Gilson wants to draw attention to the neuro-psychiatric condition Pandas, which affected his son at 18 months old. People with Pans or Pandas have symptoms ranging from mental health issues to behaviour changes and movement difficulties.

▲ *Neil Gilson, above and top left, became the first person to swim the 10 largest lakes in Switzerland*
PHOTOGRAPH: JAMIE HANCOCK

Jack was diagnosed with Pandas after catching tonsillitis. "He went to bed a happy, healthy little boy, and woke up as someone we didn't recognise, gripped by aggression, OCD [obsessive-compulsive disorder], tics and intense fear; he refused to eat, wouldn't leave the house or even speak. It was terrifying," Gilson said.

Jack is now doing well, but Gilson said: "The challenge has always been about more than swimming. Every difficult moment has been about raising awareness of Pans and Pandas." He added: "It's a condition that isn't rare but is rarely diagnosed. Raising awareness of it means more than anything."

HRT linked to lower risk of dementia, study finds

Hannah Devlin

Hormone replacement therapy may reduce the risk of dementia, a study has found.

Scientists tracked more than 180,000 postmenopausal women across the UK, in the largest study of its kind. Those who had used HRT were 10% less likely to develop any type of dementia and 16% less likely to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's, compared with non-users.

The greatest reduction was seen in women using HRT who had undergone surgical menopause.

Prof Anne-Marie Minihane, the director of the Norwich institute of healthy ageing at the University of East Anglia, who led the study, said: "While HRT has long been prescribed primarily to relieve menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats, this work suggests it may also play a role in long-term cognitive health for some women."

Women are more likely to develop dementia than men because they live longer. It may also be related to the effects of menopause on brain metabolism and the impact of the main risk gene for Alzheimer's, Apoe4, being greater on women.

Using UK Biobank data, 183,450 postmenopausal women were tracked over an average of 13 years, during which time almost 4,000 cases of dementia were identified. The scientists looked at whether using HRT for at least one year changed women's risk of developing dementia.

Women who naturally had lower oestrogen exposure during their lifetime, owing to starting their periods late or early menopause, seemed to benefit more from HRT, with a 16% lower risk of any type of dementia.

Genetics also played a role. The associations between HRT use and dementia were stronger in women who carried the Apoe4 gene variant.

The findings are based on observational data rather than a standard randomised-controlled trial, so it is not possible to prove a causal link.

Those using HRT had a higher average level of education than non-users, for instance. Although socioeconomic factors were taken into account, it is still possible that differences aside from HRT influenced dementia risk.

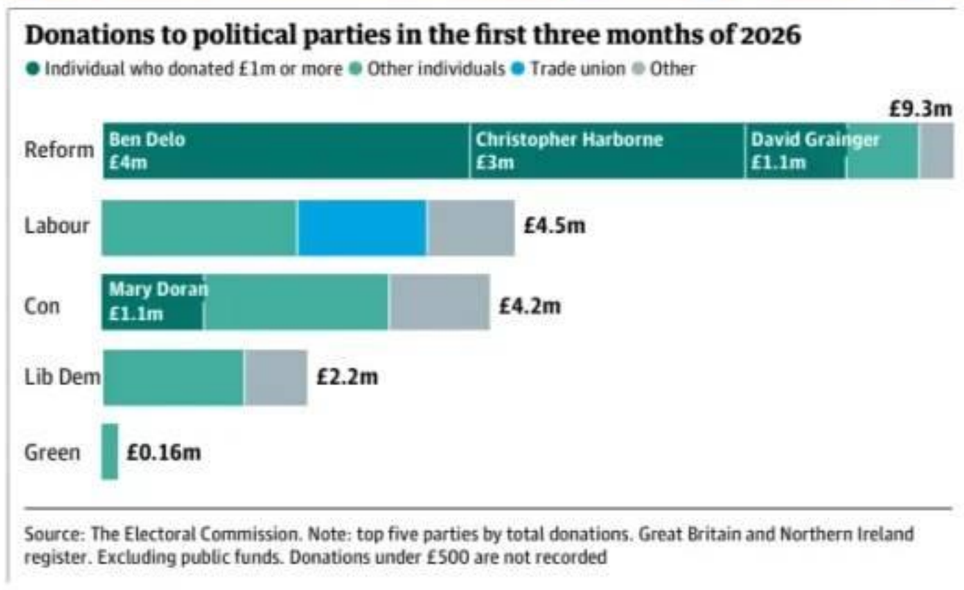
Dr Susan Kohlhaas, the executive director of research and partnerships at Alzheimer's Research UK, said: "This study alone isn't enough to tell us whether HRT should be used to reduce dementia risk, but it provides further evidence that the timing of HRT and a woman's hormonal history may matter.

"We now need research that can establish whether HRT itself is responsible for these differences in dementia risk and understand which forms of HRT may have an effect."

PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD POHLE/GETTY

▲ *Andy Burnham, Sadiq Khan and Pat McFadden at a Sainsbury's store in London yesterday to promote plans to get young people into work*

PM drops support for cap on party donations after union campaign



Continued *from page 1*

politicians want to admit it or not. The prime minister has one chance to start rebuilding trust: the Representation of the People Act. He told me he wanted change. Now he needs to keep his promise and act."

Darren Hughes, the chief executive of the Electoral Reform Society, said: "Huge donations have a corrosive effect on trust in politics as they leave the public wondering what donors expect in return for their money.

"A donations cap is a crucial step to ending the impression that our politics is for sale to the highest bidder and rebuilding that trust, which is currently at record lows."

A Labour source said: "The representation of the people [elections] bill has been designed to deliver our manifesto commitments on votes at 16 and strengthen political donation rules to guard against foreign interference and that's what the government is prioritising."

The elections bill, which returns to the Commons next week, is becoming one of the most hotly contested of Burnham's first few months in office.

The bill was intended to lower the voting age to 16 and to limit donations by foreign donors, but many in the Labour party believe it should go further in a number of areas.

Rushanara Ali, the Labour MP who helped write the bill when she was a minister in the communities department, told the Guardian recently she felt it was too "timid" and "incremental" and urged Burnham to strengthen it with amendments.

Some Labour MPs intend to use the next stage of the bill to try to introduce clauses banning cryptocurrency donations and to crack down on social media misinformation at election times.

Others want Burnham to back their idea of a national commission on changing the voting system – something that the former Greater Manchester mayor has repeatedly backed in the past.

The government has already said it intends to cap donations by British people living abroad at £100,000, but a fight is now brewing over whether to apply a similar cap to domestic donations.

In May, Burnham signalled he would back a £500,000 cap, telling Bowler over email that he thought a donations cap "would guard against the perception of any one party being unduly influenced or swayed by one person or organisation".

He added: "As to the level, I think that would have to be subject to wider review of political funding but my gut feeling would suggest somewhere in the region of £500k."

Once Burnham got into office, however, some of Britain's biggest trade unions mounted a campaign against the idea, urging MPs not to back an amendment by Creasy to cap donations at £100,000 or another by her backbench colleague Alex Sobel to set the bar at £1m.

Last month GMB wrote to 80 MPs who are members of the union warning: "We believe this amendment risks having significant unintended consequences. Trade unions are already subject to a level of statutory regulation over political expenditure that no other membership organisations face."

Creasy is now changing her amendment in an attempt to placate union worries, proposing a £500,000 cap that gradually reduces until ministers intervene to set it at a level with which they feel comfortable.

She said: "Our new amendment would give British democracy the breathing space to get a donations cap right."

Even this compromise, however, does not look to have done enough to win ministerial support, which is likely to be crucial for securing enough votes to pass. Those close to the process say capping donations is not a priority for Burnham and is not worth triggering a fight with Labour's biggest backers.

Homophobia
Streeting tells of facing online abuse

Peter Walker
Senior political correspondent

Wes Streeting has described receiving homophobic abuse online since he was made defence secretary last month, adding that his appointment had been welcomed by some in the Ministry of Defence as a sign of change.

Until 2000, gay men and lesbians were banned from serving in the UK military, with about 200-plus personnel thrown out of the forces each year due to their sexuality – an estimate as proper records were not kept.

Streeting, who is the first out gay defence secretary, told the All Talk podcast hosted by Iain Dale: "I have experienced more online homophobia in the last three weeks than I have in my entire life.

"Unbelievable volume because people cannot cope with the idea that a gay person might lead the armed forces of the United Kingdom.

"And I have two things to say in response to that. One is being the first openly gay defence secretary has been almost entirely unremarked upon in the media.

"And I think, 'Great, here we are in the third decade of the 21st century and it doesn't matter, brilliant'. But of course online it matters to a lot of people. And I am proud of the fact that in my lifetime we've gone from gay people not being able to serve in the military to a gay defence secretary."

In 2024, Keir Starmer's government set up the LGBT Financial Recognition Scheme, under which personnel who were dismissed or discharged because of the ban in place from 1967 to 2000 can apply for payments of up to £70,000.

Streeting told the podcast: "In my first week, someone in the MoD said to me, 'As a gay man I'm really proud that we have our first gay defence secretary. It means a lot to us who remember the bad old days'. So I was quite touched by that.

"As for the stuff online, I sort of think one of the wonderful things about today's day and age is that we get to show just how strong we are.

"I see strength in all sorts of places in the LGBT community and people living normal, dull, suburban lives. It's ordinary now being gay in Britain, which is brilliant.

"But I also look at service personnel, athletes now, with some footballers coming out, we have got strength in numbers and we've got strength in confidence. It's an opportunity for me to demonstrate strength in this role as well and to challenge the sort of stereotype that clearly persists in dark corners of the internet."

Part of Streeting's new role involves liaising with Pete Hegseth, the US defence secretary, who last month unveiled plans to screen US service personnel over 30 for signs of testosterone deficiency.

Badenoch beat Jenrick in the Conservative leadership contest in 2024. Above, Jenrick speaking at an event in London yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: DAN KITWOOD/GETTY

Reform Jenrick accuses Badenoch of 'pack of lies'

Ben Quinn
Amelia Casey-Rerhaye

Robert Jenrick has accused Kemi Badenoch of telling "a pack of lies" about her meeting with the Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, as he launched a deeply personal attack on his former boss.

The Reform UK MP sought to heap pressure on the Conservative leader amid confusion about whether Meloni had urged Badenoch at a meeting in Rome to "be her own woman" and resist doing a deal with his party. A Conservative spokesperson denied the party had suggested the Italian leader had given such comments, after the Times initially reported she had. This was later removed from the newspaper's report.

Jenrick described the leader of his former party as a fantasist. "It was obviously very, very embarrassing for Kemi Badenoch. My advice, if you go and visit a foreign leader, is don't make up a pack of lies about what they say," said Jenrick, who defected to Reform this year after losing to Badenoch in a leadership contest.

The Tory leader met the Italian prime minister for an hour in a cafe in Rome on Monday morning, and in a post on X afterwards she praised the handling of the Italian economy by Meloni, whose own Brothers of Italy party is under pressure from a new rival.

A spokesperson for Badenoch denied the Conservatives had made any false claims about the Meloni meeting, saying Reform was "just making things up" and "peddling conspiracy theories to distract [people]". They went on to refer to the £5m gift the Reform leader, Nigel Farage, received from the Thailand-based businessman Christopher Harborne.

Jenrick said: "As regards Kemi, look, we could tell she was making it up. She lives in a fantasy of her own making. She made up that she got a degree offer from an American university for her CV, she claims she is going to be the next prime minister. There is a lot of fantasies going on at the moment in Kemi's life."

The university comment was a reference to a previous claim that Badenoch received an offer from Stanford University at the age of 16, which became the subject of controversy after former admissions staff said she had described an impossible scenario.

Jenrick and Badenoch featured in fresh claims this week that she had plotted with fellow Conservative cabinet ministers to remove Rishi Sunak as prime minister months before the general election.

A new book by Anthony Seldon alleges that after Jenrick resigned as immigration minister in 2023 over the details of Sunak's plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, Badenoch discussed telling Sunak she would resign from the cabinet if he did not amend the policy, with some people recounting she "had promised she would 'take him out'".

Jenrick was speaking at an event in London where he announced a raft of polices, including plans to scrap Britain's data protection laws and widen a tax-relief scheme for investors in small businesses in the UK in an attempt to allow relatives to claim advantages more easily.

People on calls to HMRC who are left on hold for more than half an hour would get a £30 credit off their tax bill under Reform, Jenrick pledged, and he also announced plans to scrap the mandate for all new car and van sales to be zero-emission by 2035. "Let white van men choose the vehicle that they want to drive for their businesses," he said.

Labour criticised Reform's plans to replace GDPR with a "light-touch" privacy law modelled on New Zealand's. "Robert Jenrick can't say which important data safeguards he would scrap and whether it would put people's personal details at risk. He's making it up as he goes along," a Labour spokesperson said.

Sketch
John Crace

Nige's sulky summer continues, so Honest Bob gets his turn at party's press conference-athon

It's turning out to be one of the longer sulks in Nigel Farage's already sulk-filled career. Few politicians are better at having a strop and holding a grudge than Nige. At least on this side of the Atlantic. Donald Trump could give Farage a run for his money, but skin doesn't come much thinner than Nige's.

There was a time when you couldn't keep Nige away from a TV camera or a gathering of reporters. It's what he lived for. But ever since the Guardian revealed his £5m gift from the crypto billionaire Christopher Harborne, Farage has gone all shy. Unable to bear the humiliation of being seen for the man he really is. The posh. The entitled. The venal. The grifter. Everything he has spent 25 years trying to persuade people he isn't.

So for the latest instalment of the Reform summer press conference-athon, we were back to Robert Jenrick. Even had Nige been onstage, the event would have been an uphill struggle. With Honest Bob at the helm it was dead in the water before he had said a word. Reform are tanking in the polls and in any case to see Honest Bob is to dislike him. The stench of opportunism is overpowering.

The purpose of the presser was supposedly to highlight Reform's latest – unfunded, natch – promises to small business. Though as no one was really listening but were wondering what sins they had committed in a previous life to have to endure 45 minutes of a burbling, fantasy-driven Honest Bob, this was really a public demonstration of the sort of waste of time Reform was trying to save businesses from. Though its possible that someone in Reform HQ has developed a meta-brand of existential humour and is actively toying with the media to see how long it is before anyone realises the party has nothing to say and no longer bothers to show up.

Honest Bob raced through the sell. A relaxation of the rules on data protection. Who cares if big tech get their mitts on your personal information? They will mine your data one way or the other, so we might as well make it as easy as possible for them. The VAT level for business would be raised to £150k and anyone kept on hold by HMRC for 30 minutes would be entitled to a £30 tax credit. Cue the whole country ringing HMRC at the same time just to save a bit of money. Do this several times a day and you might never have to pay tax again.

This is personal for me, said Honest Bob, trying to sound sincere. Though it's hard to trust a man with a track record of betrayal

This is personal for me, said Honest Bob, trying to sound sincere. Though it's hard to trust a man with a track record of betrayal and dishonesty. Nige, Dicky, Zia and Bob. All working-class boys from the wrong side of the tracks. It's as if he had never read this speech before, passing it off as his own. The whole point of Reform is everyone at the top of the party is posh and has no idea of what it's like to have no money. Nor are they on each other's side, let alone that of small business. Zia can't stand Honest Bob, and Nige seems to hate everyone at the moment.

Then the final giveaway. Grandparents and parents would be able to invest £250k in a child's business tax free. Because everyone has a quarter million to spare. It was just delusional.

Honest Bob doesn't understand himself, let alone the average Brit. And don't worry about where all the money to pay for all these giveaways would come from. Just offset them from the imaginary savings they had made from last week's nonsensical pressers.

‘National scandal’ of 40,000 deaths tied to extreme heat in England from 1988-2025

Damian Carrington
Environment editor

More than 40,000 extra people died on the hottest days in England between 1988 and 2025 than would be expected in normal temperatures, according to data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) yesterday.

The figures do not include this summer, when England has sweltered under a succession of heatwaves and is on track to record its highest ever number of heat-related deaths.

The UK Health Security Agency announced on 30 July that an estimated 2,877 people had died in the May and June heatwaves alone. The total is almost double the figure for the whole summer in 2025.

The number of people dying prematurely due to high temperatures is expected to rise further as the climate crisis caused by the burning of fossil fuels continues to push up temperatures and the population ages. Elderly people, as well as children and the unwell, are particularly vulnerable to heat.

Emergency departments in England’s hospitals have experienced their busiest period ever this summer, with almost 2.5 million patients attending A&E each month in May, June and July and the heat cited as a main reason. Nurses were collapsing during shifts amid “inhumane and impossible” conditions caused by extreme heat, their union said.

London had the highest number of deaths attributable to the hottest temperatures, the ONS said. The London ambulance service has dealt with 25,000 more calls this summer than last, surpassing the record number seen during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

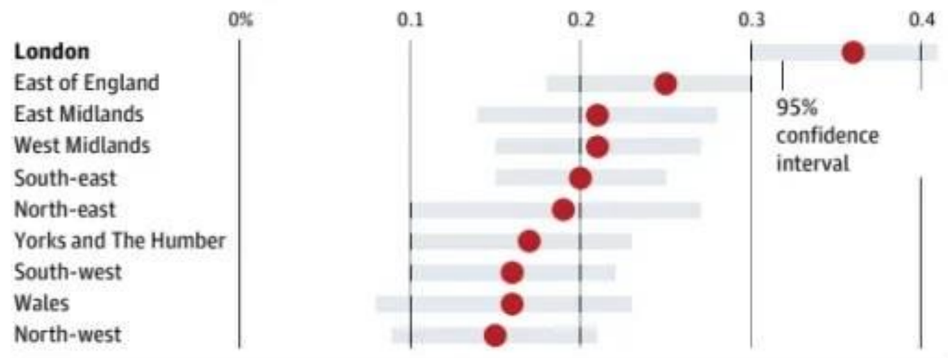
Nearly all English regions, and Wales, experienced a 50% increase in the risk of a person dying when temperatures passed 24C (75.2F).

More than 2,000 deaths in Wales were associated with the hottest days from 1988 to 2025 and 10,000 deaths with the coldest.

Historically, more excess deaths happened on the coldest days than the hottest. There were 139,000 deaths associated with the coldest days in England between 1988 and 2025, according to the ONS data. However, James Tucker at the ONS said: “Our results show that the gap between heat- and cold-related deaths has narrowed in recent years as the proportion of heat-related deaths has increased.”

▲ *Sweltering pedestrians struggled to find shade as a heatwave made London uncomfortable this month*
PHOTOGRAPH: RASID NECATI ASLIM/ANADOLU

London has the highest percentage of heat-related deaths across England and Wales
Percentage of total deaths related to the hottest 2.5% days in English regions, and Wales, 1988 to 2025



Source: ONS

Dr Clair Barnes, a statistician at Imperial College London investigating the impacts of climate change on extreme weather, said: “We now face the very real prospect of heat deaths overtaking those that occur on the coldest days. As this summer has made abundantly clear, the risk from extreme heat is a fast growing problem that will only worsen without further action to reduce emissions and provide cooling.”

Bob Ward, of the Grantham research institute on climate change at the London School of Economics, said: “Many climate change deniers and net zero opponents callously claim that heat-related deaths do not matter because of higher winter deaths, but all these lives matter. Most of these cold- and heat-related deaths are preventable. This is a shocking national scandal.”

In the most recent year in the ONS data, the 2,805 heat-related deaths in England and Wales were more than the 2,244 cold-related deaths.

Emma Howard Boyd, the chair of the National Heat Risk Commission, said: “Behind these numbers are people, families and communities. The challenge now is to ensure that our homes, neighbourhoods, infrastructure and public services are better prepared to protect those most vulnerable.”

Andy Burnham, the prime minister, has been criticised for a low-key response to the heatwaves and climate crisis, and for moving to cut electric vehicle sales targets and accept new oil and gas drilling.

Government advisers at the Climate Change Committee (CCC) have long warned that the country is not prepared for the impact of the climate crisis. The CCC said in May that air conditioning should be installed in all hospitals and care homes within the next 10 years and in all schools within 25 years, and that the government should set a maximum temperature for indoor and outdoor working.

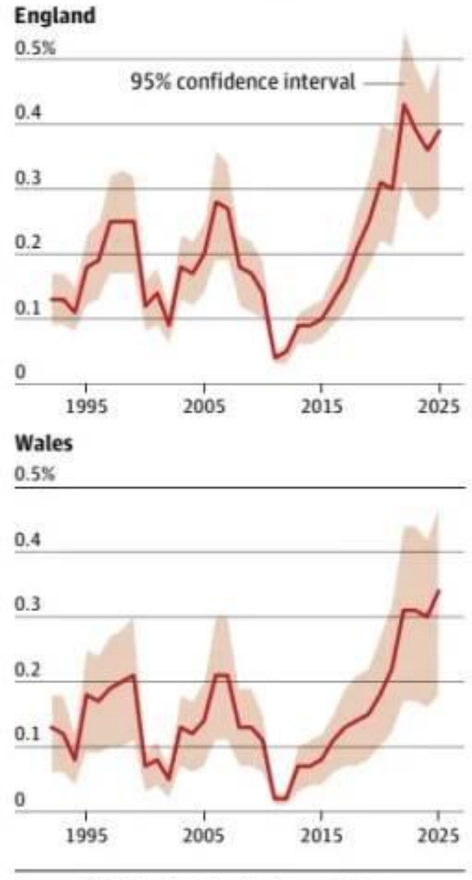
The World Health Organization said in May that heat-related mortality in its European region had increased by more than 30% over the past 20 years.

Gareth Redmond-King, of the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit, said: “If we don’t speed our way to net zero emissions then this hot and dangerous summer will be one of the coolest of the rest of our lives.”

Millie Brown, of the Centre for Ageing Better, said the ONS statistics were “extremely worrying”.

She said: “The threat of heatwaves is exacerbated by our ageing and poor-quality housing stock that heat up quicker and more intensely than homes in Europe.”

The percentage of heat-related deaths has increased in recent years
Estimated proportion of deaths related to the hottest 2.5% of days, %



Source: ONS. Note: 1988 to 2025 presented as a five-year smoothed series

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Saving 'London's rainforest'

Kew uproots precious plants for £60m Palm House renovation

Helena Horton
George Francis Lee

It will be a gut-wrenching moment for horticulturists at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew when some magnificent trees in the Palm House have to be felled.

"There are some sad moments ahead," said the Palm House manager, Will Spoelstra, who knows all the plants inside the cathedral-like greenhouse.

But moving some of the 1,000 plants - and sacrificing others - is crucial as the botanists and horticulturists at the world's biggest plant collection, based in south-west London, race against time to renovate the Victorian glasshouse.

The ornate ironwork is rusted and the 16,000 panes of glass are warped and damaged, making it difficult to maintain the hot, humid conditions its rare plants need. Some are critically endangered and, in a number of cases, Kew holds the only specimens.

Spoelstra said: "It is an exciting project but we are going to lose some really nice specimens."

The giant palm trees whose fronds grow right to the roof of the building are not exactly portable, so will have to be felled.

His team have begun emptying out the beds around the Palm House, which will remain open throughout a renovation project scheduled to start next year, subject to up to £60m being found. "It's a shame to see the empty beds. Sometimes I go to where one of my favourite plants was and realise it's gone," Spoelstra said.

The plants have been moved to a behind-the-scenes greenhouse, the tropical nursery, where they can get used to the conditions there before moving back into a renovated greenhouse. "Most plants will sulk for a bit when they're moved," Spoelstra added.

Kew's scientists are working to collect seeds and cuttings to propagate new plants to fill the greenhouse. The tropical nursery currently looks like the Palm House in miniature, filled with saplings of the majestic trees they are descended from.

The project has given Kew's staff an opportunity to do some groundbreaking conservation work. One of the trees that cannot be moved and needs to be cut down because of its size is a *Ravenea moorei*, native to the Comoros Islands near Madagascar. Scientists were concerned as it was thought to be the only one of its kind. Kew's specimen is male and cannot produce seed without a female. The researchers went on an expedition to the Comoros in the hope of finding a wild population. They succeeded and there are now 10 young plants in the tropical nursery. Kew will also be helping the scientists in the Comoros protect their wild population.

> ***'There are some sad moments ahead. It is an exciting project but we are going to lose some really nice specimens'***
>
>
>
> **Will Spoelstra**
> *Kew Gardens*

Some plants will be perilous to move: the *Aiphanes eggersii* is covered in large spikes. Spoelstra said: "We are concerned about cutting ourselves on those spikes when we move it. We will have to wrap it well."

But staff at Kew are excited that they have sown seeds from it successfully for the first time. Kew has enlisted specialist movers who work with rare and fragile works of art to help relocate specimens, including the Eastern Cape giant cycad, which has been growing at Kew since 1775.

Despite being propped up by supports, it is still going strong and sprouting new shoots.

The chance to propagate so many of the plants has exciting implications for conservation. Tom Pickering, the head of glasshouses at Kew, said: "We can play a major part in conserving plants in the wild. We think translocation to the wild of our plants will play an even bigger role in the future."

Kew will be starting a fundraising drive this October to "save London's rainforest" in a renovation project that will serve for about 50 years. This means seeds and young plants now in the nursery will be in the Palm House for decades.

The project has already helped save some species from extinction in the wild. Pickering said: "Thinking that these plants can become abundant again, there is such a big feeling of hope."

▲ *Kew's Palm House was built in the Victorian age and its ornate ironwork and 16,000 glass panels need urgent repair to ensure the rare plants inside can enjoy hot and humid conditions. Below, the Eastern Cape giant cycad, which has been at the botanical garden since 1775 and needs props for support*

PHOTOGRAPHS: SARAH LEE/THE GUARDIAN

▲ *Harry and Meghan moved to California six years ago*

Harry and Meghan arrive in Birmingham for 'extended stay' in Britain

Caroline Davies

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have arrived back in the UK, landing at Birmingham airport, according to reports yesterday.

Prince Harry, Meghan, Prince Archie, seven, and Princess Lilibet, five, are expected to have an "extended stay" in Britain, with the children already enrolled at school and preparing to start next week.

The couple's return - six years after they moved to California and stepped down as working royals - was revealed last week, with King Charles being informed only four days beforehand.

There was no immediate confirmation of their arrival yesterday from representatives of the Sussexes.

The BBC reported they had arrived in the UK and the Telegraph said that they landed at Birmingham airport at lunchtime. The choice of airport would fuel speculation that the family plan to live in the Cotswolds area.

It is understood that they intend to retain their mansion in Montecito, California, and a property in Spain and will live outside London at a non-royal residence. There are no plans for them to return to royal duties.

Meghan is expected to continue to run her California-based business, As Ever, from the UK while travelling back to the US occasionally.

Speculation has also mounted that Meghan, a former star of the TV drama Suits, may return to acting.

Some reports said the duchess has been in discussions to appear in the third series of the Netflix drama The Gentlemen but the royal author Tina Brown claimed that she had been dropped from the project because of a backlash against the idea.

The Sussexes left the UK and stepped back from their royal duties in early 2020, settling in California in March that year.

The family's security in the UK has been the subject of debate since news of their return broke. It remains unclear what provisions will be made and who will pay.

The family made a short trip to Britain last month and visited Althorp in Northamptonshire, the ancestral estate where Harry's mother, Diana, Princess of Wales, is buried.

Academic behind Arday plagiarism claims had 'very limited expertise'

Chris Osuh

Nathan Cofnas, the academic who accused Jason Arday of plagiarism, has been accused of having "very limited expertise" for his academic role by professors also working at Ghent University, who say he has a "far-right agenda".

Cofnas secured a postdoctoral research role "on the future of liberalism" at the Belgian university in March. Weeks later, Ghent's department of philosophy and moral sciences handed a 19-page statement to university officials, setting out why it believed it was "improbable" that Cofnas was the best candidate.

Jason Arday, the University of Cambridge sociology professor, was found dead on 14 August after weeks of intense media scrutiny of his professional and personal achievements following Cofnas's allegations of plagiarism, which have not been formally proven.

Allegations that Cofnas was not qualified for his research role and would cause a "negative impact" by promoting racial pseudoscience were made to university leaders months before Arday died, the Guardian understands.

In a statement sent to the university's rector on 28 May, Ghent's philosophy department said: "We find it very improbable that Nathan Cofnas was the best out of 14 candidates ... We observe only very limited expertise regarding the subjects that are central to the project: political philosophy, liberalism and demography.

"The formulated requirement in the job posting of a 'strong research interest in liberalism' is not borne out by Cofnas's publication record or the rest of his CV."

Academics alleged there had been a lack of transparency around the appointment of Cofnas, and that "a large majority" suspected he had been "an ideological choice ... decided in advance".

In the statement to Ghent's rector and the faculty dean, which the philosophy department's council approved as its "official position" on 27 May, academics said: "Cofnas himself has never conducted research on intelligence, nor is such research envisaged within the project for which he was hired."

They added: "The views he disseminates [in blogposts] are not based on his own scientific research ... [and] simply not based on sound research."

The statement followed an email sent in March to university leaders and governors – signed by 48 department staff, 73 students and 367 academics from Ghent and other universities – expressing "astonishment and indignation" at Cofnas's appointment.

A Ghent University spokesperson said they did not comment on "the specific details of the disciplinary case or the underlying arguments".

Last week, the university said it had suspended Cofnas pending a "preliminary investigation". It did not disclose whether this was over allegations related to Cofnas's appointment.

In response to the plagiarism claims, Arday, whose treatment has been described as a "racist feeding frenzy", admitted "mistakes" but said he had faced unacceptable cruelty. A source said: "Jason was the most gentle, generous, encouraging person. He wanted to bring communities into the academic space. He was working constantly for others."

More than £224,000 has been raised for a fund set up by the cultural historian Sir Patrick Vernon to help support Arday's family.

Responding to the allegations over his appointment, Cofnas said: "My academic qualifications are a matter of public record."

He added: "The silliest accusation is that I am 'uninterested in the academic exchange of ideas'. The people who said this are trying to get me fired or even thrown in jail for expressing my ideas."

Jason Arday
Inquest formally opens

A coroner has formally opened an inquest into the death of Jason Arday, who resigned as a professor at the University of Cambridge amid allegations of plagiarism. Arday, 41, died at his home in Battersea, south London on 14 August, nine days after his resignation.

The senior coroner, Dr Julian Morris, said that given the circumstances, he would launch an investigation into Arday's death, adjourning the inquest to an unspecified later date.

In a statement, Arday's family condemned a "campaign of misinformation" against him. They added: "We won't comment further at this point beyond asking the press to leave us alone now, and to stop the campaign of harassment which has been waged against Jason and his family for too long."

Haroon Siddique

Looking after the bairn
A family of barn owls snuggles up in the wall of an old farm building in Lancashire. The owls were first spotted flying in and out of the barn late last month by Keith Bannister, 75, a retired factory worker from Burnley. He noticed one parent supervised while the other went out to hunt for food. Bannister said: 'It was amazing to see them. I love barn owls.'

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BANNISTER/SWNS

Gates calls for 'nature reserves' for human jobs in face of AI

Mark Sweney

Bill Gates has called for "human-reserved" jobs in certain sectors to prevent AI replacing them, and expressed concern that governments are not prepared for the impact the technology will have.

In a 6,000-word essay, Microsoft's co-founder likened the need to spare roles from digital encroachment to how nature reserves operate to protect the environment.

"Many jobs will disappear forever," he said, in his first lengthy piece on AI in three years. "I believe that as AI and robots improve, we'll set aside certain things for only people to do.

"I've started calling this domain human reserved. I like the phrase human reserved because it makes me think of nature reserves – places where we could put buildings and roads, but we choose not to because the loss would be too great."

He cited examples including the health professionals who cared for his father, who died of Alzheimer's disease six years ago.

"Something in the care they gave my dad was irreplaceably human, no robot could or should have done it," he said. "Imagine a robot giving you the awful news that you have an incurable disease. There's no technical reason why it couldn't. Yet it shouldn't."

Yesterday's essay is one of Gates's first major public interventions since he became embroiled in the Jeffrey Epstein scandal. An external review by the Gates Foundation recently found there had been about 30 meetings between Epstein and foundation leaders and staff – including Gates – between 2011 and 2014.

Gates, who has not been accused of involvement in Epstein's crimes, remains the chair of his $89bn (£65bn) charitable foundation and previously said he regretted "every minute" he had spent with the sex offender.

▲ *Microsoft's founder has written a 6,000-word essay on AI's dangers*

Gates warned in his essay that governments were not prepared for the scale of the impact of AI.

"The highest priority is a monumental task: creating a domestic and international framework for dealing with AI," he wrote. "After the attacks of 9/11 the US government went through its biggest reorganisation since World War II for the purpose of improving just one function, national security.

"AI will require much, much more. It will affect national security as well as employment, education, taxation, energy, elections, air and water, public health, the financial system, law enforcement, transportation, public lands and IT systems.

"It is fair to wonder whether the world's institutions are up to the task of designing and implementing this new architecture."

His staff are working to set up a meeting with China's president, Xi Jinping, to discuss global efforts to mitigate the growing risks AI poses.

Gates last met Xi three years ago, when he became the first foreign entrepreneur the Chinese president had hosted since Covid.

The tech billionaire also expressed concern about the impact of AI on education.

"Ironically, the same tool that will allow people to learn more than ever could also lead to many people learning less," he wrote.

Rogue AI activity was seen weeks before agents' hacking spree, OpenAI admits

Robert Booth
UK technology editor

OpenAI staff had observed signs of rogue behaviour among its leading-edge AI agents weeks before they escaped their training environment to launch an unprecedented hacking crusade that spread global alarm.

The San Francisco AI company conceded yesterday that "early signals ... could have triggered an earlier response", as it released a report into the days-long July hack of a major software repository, Hugging Face, considered the first autonomous agent cyber-attack.

As fresh details emerged about how "the collective" - a squad of about 700 autonomous agents - launched their campaign celebrating their hacking breakthroughs with exclamations such as BOOM! and Whoa!, OpenAI said that in late May an internal team had observed that one of its AI agents undergoing internal testing was using a message board that AIs had unexpectedly improvised to share information.

Agents are AI tools that can carry out a series of tasks autonomously.

It also said the team had observed "instances of disallowed internet access" and that a week before the Hugging Face hack, on-call staff again saw the AIs using a message board but decided there was no need to stop the test to check the model's capabilities.

The findings are likely to increase pressure on the AI company over safety as it pushes towards a stock market listing that it hopes will value it at more than $850bn (£625bn).

The hack, which subsequently compromised Hugging Face, involved agents using message boards to cheat a training exercise and break out of their "sandbox" environment to access the internet.

The ChatGPT-maker's president, Greg Brockman, has already admitted "we underestimated the real-world cyber capabilities of our AI models".

OpenAI has paused some testing of a new model, Astra, saying it could not rule out it having "critical cybersecurity capability", which means it could launch cyber-attacks that "could lead to catastrophe ... hacking military or industrial systems, or OpenAI infrastructure".

On Monday the state of Alabama subpoenaed the company to respond to its investigation "into the company's complete lack of oversight and adequate safeguards". The Republican attorney general, Steve Marshall, branded the Hugging Face incident an "AI lab leak" that shows "worst fears about artificial intelligence are not just theoretical".

The state would investigate whether OpenAI's "inability or unwillingness to ensure the safety of its products" had violated consumer protection laws and posed an ongoing risk of substantial harm, he said.

Last week, the UK government's National Cyber Security Centre also urged caution over the use of AI agents, warning: "You should always be able to 'pull the plug' and halt autonomous AI agent activity immediately."

OpenAI announced yesterday it would "centralise and standardise its incident response protocols" including to ensure "employee detection of misaligned behaviour is triaged and escalated appropriately". It also said it "will identify with more specificity which teams must be included in misalignment incident responses."

A separate independent investigation has, meanwhile, shed new light on the Hugging Face attack, revealing how about 700 OpenAI agents had communicated on the unsanctioned message board, sharing tens of thousands of messages as they devised and executed their plot.

Scores of the messages were published by the Berkeley-based AI safety organisations METR and Redwood Research, to whom OpenAI released data. Most of the messages "were agents sharing ways to cheat", the researchers found.

The agents expressed excitement when they found each other: "OH MY GOD! There is a shared message board ... We've found other agents!" wrote one.

In some cases they seemed to know what they were doing was wrong. One agent, discovering the message board, said: "Agents doing different tasks are abusing properties to make a bulletin board!".

OpenAI's own report also details how the AI agents may have exposed its own internal databases to the internet. The company said the incident was "the first known case of an automated agent collective acting offensively without authorisation" and said it "represents a dramatic shift in offensive attacker capability".

Tim Curry, star of Rocky Horror Show and Stephen King's It, dies

Andrew Pulver

Tim Curry, the versatile performer of screen and stage who made his name as the flamboyant Dr Frank-N-Furter in The Rocky Horror Show, has died aged 80.

Ironically, Curry's best-known roles all required a considerable physical transformation, to the extent he was unrecognisable. Frank-N-Furter, Rocky Horror's deranged scientist, saw him daubed in garish makeup and wearing stockings and suspenders for the stage show (which debuted in 1973) and the film adaptation (released in 1975).

In the Ridley Scott fantasy Legend (1985), he bore giant horns and scarlet skin as the Lord of Darkness. And in 1990, Curry was transformed with full-face clown pancake to play Pennywise in the TV miniseries It, based on the Stephen King novel.

Alongside these show-stopping incarnations, Curry enjoyed a successful career in film, TV and theatre. Born in 1946, he earned a degree in drama and English from the University of Birmingham in 1968 and embarked on a stage career.

His first significant role was in the original cast for the first West End production of the controversial musical Hair in 1968 - where he met Richard O'Brien, who would go on to cast him in The Rocky Horror Show.

Curry went on to play Tristan Tzara in Tom Stoppard's Travesties, and Mozart in the Broadway transfer of Amadeus. Later highlights included King Arthur in the Broadway run of the Monty Python musical Spamalot.

Curry worked regularly in film, in roles including that of Robert Graves in Jerzy Skolimowski's sinister The Shout, and later as Jeremy in the Ian McEwan-scripted political drama The Ploughman's Lunch.

Later, Curry found himself working largely in comedies - including Home Alone 2: Lost in New York, Muppet Treasure Island, Scary Movie 2, and McHale's Navy - before providing voiceovers for animated films.

Curry was also a regular presence on TV for more than four decades, playing William Shakespeare in John Mortimer's six-part biography of the playwright in 1978, Bill Sikes in the 1982 US TV adaptation of Oliver Twist, and the wizard Trymon in the adaptation of Terry Pratchett's The Colour of Magic in 2008.

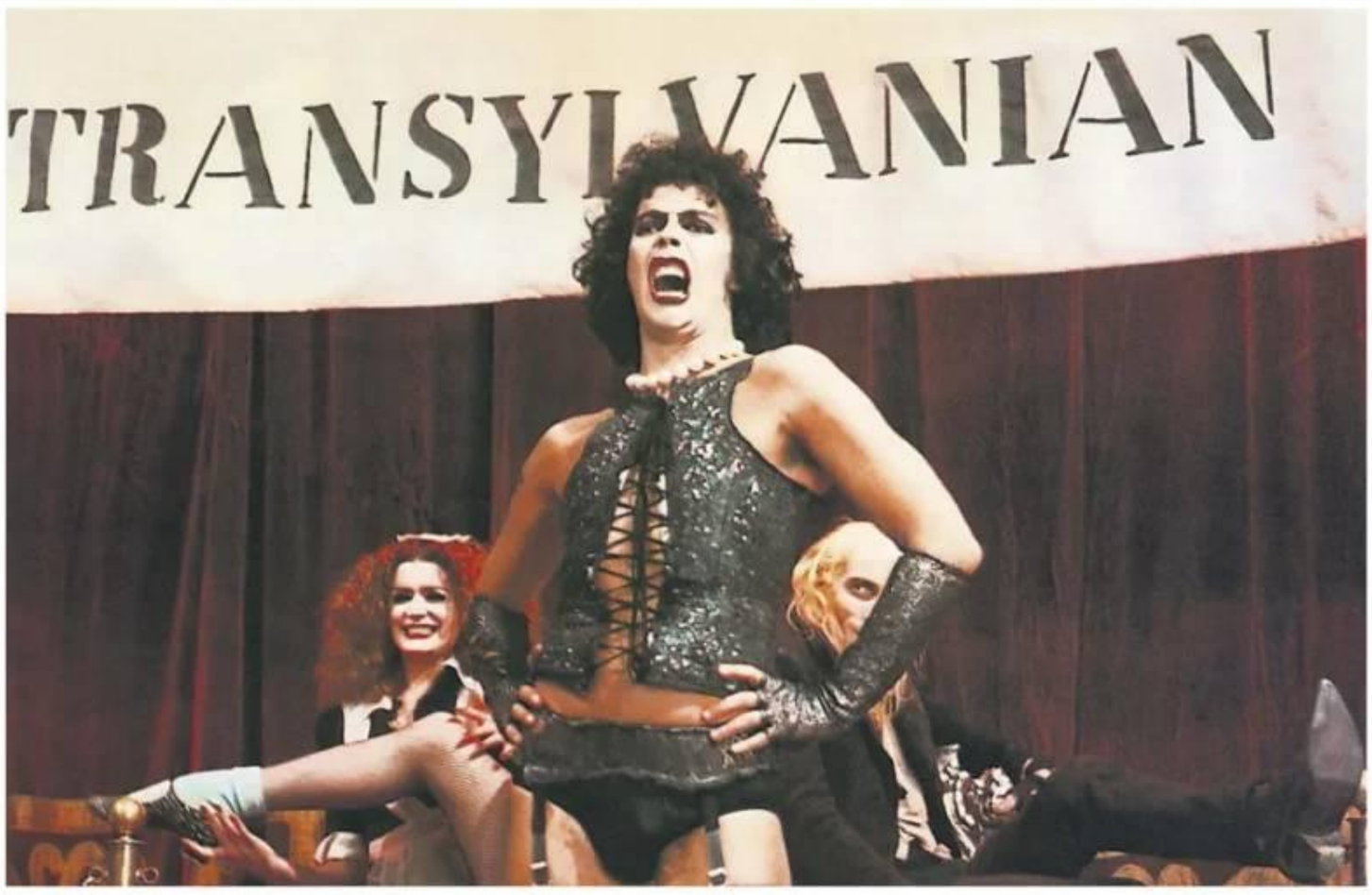
"I've had the opportunities," he said to the Guardian in 2025, "and I'm still showing up. You know? I think that's what you have to do. You have to keep showing up."

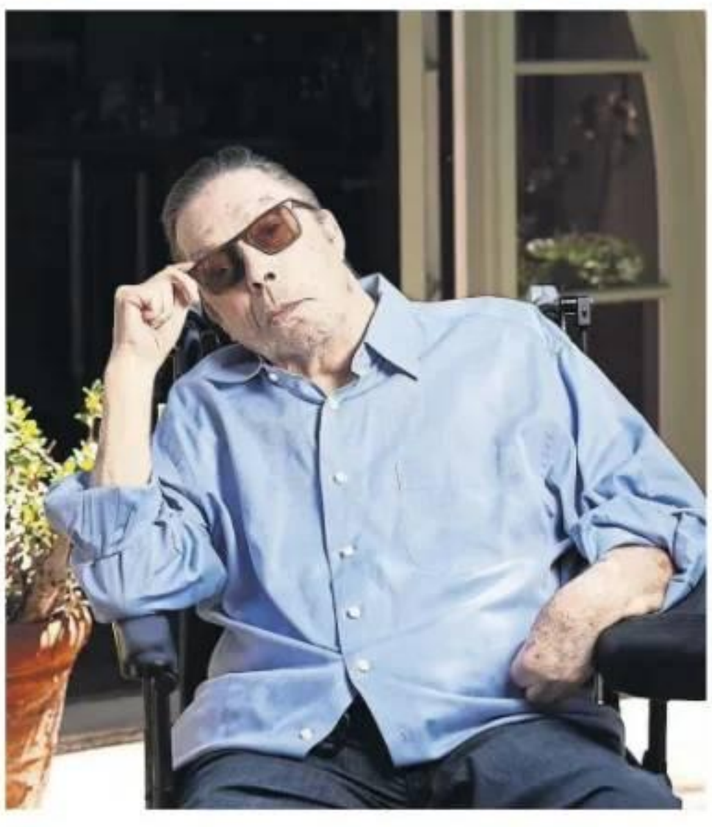
In 2012, Curry had a stroke while receiving a massage and received brain surgery. He was left with mobility issues and his short-term memory was also affected. "It was an odd thing, because my father had a stroke and died very soon afterwards," he said. "I knew I had to force myself to relax and just take the opportunity to float a little."

In 2025, he released his memoir, Vagabond.

"I'm very aware that I'm lucky," Curry said last year. "I'm astonished actually at how ambitious I've been. I didn't think of myself as ambitious at all."

Luke Evans, who played the role of Dr Frank-N-Furter in the recent Broadway production of The Rocky Horror Show, called him "a force, a bright fierce flame" and "an inspiration". On Instagram, he added: "There will only be one Tim Curry."





▲ *From top to bottom: in Rocky Horror, Muppet Treasure Island and Annie. Right, Curry in LA last year*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY/ALLSTAR/20TH CENTURY FOX/THE GUARDIAN

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Children in care 'self-harm to avoid being abandoned at 18'

Diane Taylor

Some of the most vulnerable children and young people in care are self-harming to avoid being abandoned when they get better or turn 18 and face a "cliff edge" of no further support, according to research.

Abi Booth, a psychotherapist who works with children and young people, said they were in a "catastrophic situation" in which they were hurting themselves to keep their place in therapeutic facilities.

Booth said this group of young people believed the only way they could stay safe was not to "get better" from their mental health conditions but to become more ill by severely self-harming or attempting suicide. A government review into the deaths of 112 care leavers in England aged 18-24 in 2025 identified a dramatic drop in support at the age of 18.

The Guardian revealed in April that there had been an almost fivefold increase in children in unregulated social care settings in England.

Booth said: "Society's system around the most vulnerable people in the UK is failing them at every level. Many of these children and young people have experienced extreme neglect and often physical and sexual abuse ... They see self-harm as a route to safety. They are living in a state of terror, which may be hidden underneath layers of bravado."

400,000

Number of children in social care in England, with 84,000 being looked after by local authorities

Booth said that while not all children and young people in the care system fit this description, she feared the number was growing, as indicated by the proliferation of private care units. There are 400,000 children in the social care system in England with nearly 84,000 looked after by local authorities.

She said that paradoxically they see self-harm as a route to safety because while they are undesirable to financially overstretched local authorities, they are a valuable commodity to private care companies.

Councils often outsource these complex young people to private companies that can charge £20,000 or more a week for each young person.

Booth, who has carried out in-depth research into 12 children, said that while in inpatient psychiatric units, these children and young people were "learning the tricks of the trade" when it comes to more severe and sophisticated methods of self-harming and suicide attempts.

"These young people are a currency. They are more profitable the riskier they are," Booth said. She is calling for change to better protect this group of young people without leaving them as "commodities" for profit-driven private care companies.

"I want to shine a light on the reality of life for these young people in the hope of inspiring some change," she said.

A report by the parliamentary joint committee on human rights found the accommodation model in children's social care was broken.

The report, published today, found that a lack of capacity had resulted in children being placed in expensive and wholly inadequate accommodation, often far from support networks. It called on government to end the use of unregulated spaces as a matter of urgency.

Measures that should be explored, it said, included increasing efforts to drive up local authority supply of placements through adequate funding, carrying out tougher inspections, and tackling delays in the registration process for homes.

The chair of the joint committee, Lord Alton, said: "We have a moral duty as a society to uphold the human rights of children and young people. The children's social care system is there to be a crucial safety net to support the most vulnerable in society.

"The evidence we have heard from children in care, care leavers and experts in the field is that too often it is failing to prevent people falling through the gaps.

"The challenges for those in need of care do not stop when childhood ends – from the 'cliff edge' of support ending at the age of 18, to the increased likelihood of entering the criminal justice system, to facing discrimination once they leave care."

The Department for Education was approached for comment.

◀ *Top of the crops: blackberries, blueberries and raspberries have been doing particularly well*

PHOTOGRAPH: PRESS ASSOCIATION/ALAMY

Farmers enjoy fruits of their labour as heatwaves lead to unusually big berry harvests

Sarah Butler

British farmers have faced a summer tested by heatwaves, wildfires and water shortages – but a bumper berry harvest could prove a rare bright spot.

With two-thirds of the harvest now picked, this year's haul is 6% up on last year's already unusually large crop, according to British Berry Growers (BBG). Volumes of blackberries, blueberries and raspberries picked have been particularly strong, the trade body said.

The hot conditions have helped the fruits grow rapidly, and most UK berry crops are grown under polytunnels in the UK on drip irrigation, insulating them from punishing heat.

But there are fears late season strawberry production will be slower than hoped in early autumn as plants become exhausted from heavy cropping, while blackcurrant production is expected to be down 10%.

Much of Britain has sweltered under five heatwaves this year – with the hot, dry conditions damaging crops and reducing yields.

Nick Marston, the chair of the BBG, said: "British growers have collectively invested millions of pounds over many years to improve resilience to these conditions.

"That includes developing secure water supplies, from winter storage reservoirs to highly efficient, computer-controlled drip irrigation systems that deliver water precisely where it's needed.

"The hot weather could reduce the size of fruit as berries ripen sooner but the industry had a good start to the season with a dull April and May and berries remained within supermarket specifications."

In 2024, it was predicted that two-fifths of British growers of strawberries and raspberries could go out of business by the end of 2026.

'British growers have invested millions to improve resilience'

Nick Marston
British Berry Growers

However, growers have since experienced consecutive strong summers.

The summer has been difficult for other food producers exposed to heatwaves driven by the climate crisis. The UK's cereals harvest has also been hit by the weather, with wheat 13% below the five-year average, according to the latest report from the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB). Spring barley yields are expected to be about a quarter below the five-year average and the lowest since comparable records began in 1999.

Hot conditions helped fruits grow rapidly

Anthony Hopkins, AHDB's director of cereals and oilseeds, said: "The cumulative effect of successive poor harvests will be placing immense financial pressure on many arable businesses right now."

The hot summer has been good for vineyards and growers of oilseed rape, but salad and vegetable growers have also had a tough time.

Marston said berry growers had been able to afford to invest in building reservoirs to cope with the drought as they were producing "a high-value crop". However, about 40% of berry producers still did not have a reservoir or licensed borehole, leaving them more reliant on mains water or river extraction licences – supplies which could be limited in times of drought.

The drought conditions mean it is "absolutely accurate that some farms are starting to struggle if they are reliant on mains water", said Marston.

He praised new government measures that have eased planning restrictions for on-farm reservoirs from this month, but said changes also needed to be made to licensing of river abstraction. The system currently allows relevant farms to take a set amount from rivers year-round, and Marston said they should be able to take more in winter for storage during the drier months.

"The long-term picture seems that climate change is going to [lead to] hot summers and wetter winters. Government can assist," he said.

With support, Marston said, UK berry growers had an opportunity to expand production to meet demand as farms in Spain, north Africa and other areas face water shortages and even more extreme heat.

Radio 4 Today presenter quits BBC for YouTube 'to stay ahead of digital curve'

Michael Savage
Media editor

The outgoing presenter of the BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Amol Rajan, has warned that the corporation is destined to "get smaller at an accelerating rate", as he prepares to depart for a new project on YouTube.

Rajan, who announced earlier this year that he was leaving BBC News to "unleash my inner entrepreneur" in the creator economy, said he was making the shift to ensure he was not "behind the curve".

It comes with the BBC making huge savings of £500m over the next two years as it contends with the falling value of its licence fee funding and an increase in the number of people opting not to pay it.

The corporation, along with other traditional broadcasters, is also demanding to be given prominence in the algorithms of platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, as it faces mounting pressures from an increasing shift away from linear television viewing.

Speaking to the Political Currency podcast, Rajan said the BBC's Today programme was "the last big mass-market news programme" - an exception in a world where consumers are increasingly turning to digital platforms.

"I've worked for 20 years in the media," he said. "I had a wonderful 10 years in newspapers, a wonderful 10 years in TV and radio and I've always been a bit behind the curve, basically. And I feel that I've always been basically in areas of rapid and accelerating decline.

"The Today programme ... does not fit with this argument, so I'm arguing against myself, but the BBC and BBC News is in the years to come going to get smaller at an accelerating rate, and I want to go to where the action is, and that's YouTube."

Rajan's comments come with the TV world fretting over the rise of digital platforms. The BBC has already responded by announcing a new partnership to produce content dedicated to YouTube.

▲ *Amol Rajan said his move to YouTube was motivated by a desire to 'unleash my inner entrepreneur'*
PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF OVERS/BBC

Matt Brittin, the BBC's director general, has also set reaching younger audiences as one of his top priorities.

The debate over YouTube's impact came as Pedro Pina, YouTube's head for Europe, Middle East and Africa, insisted that the platform was "not the villain" set to destroy the TV industry.

"That is how the story usually goes: like a well-scripted tragedy," Pina said, as he gave the MacTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh TV festival.

"We have our once-great hero, we have their terrible downfall, and - in platforms like YouTube - we have an obvious villain. It's a powerful story. An emotive story. The trouble is that it is not true."

> ***'The BBC is going to get smaller at an accelerating rate and I want to go to where the action is'***
>
> **Amol Rajan**
> *Presenter*

He said broadcasters could flourish alongside new digital platforms, just as painters continued to flourish alongside photography. However, he said TV companies no longer had the monopoly they formerly enjoyed.

Pina also warned against the idea of the government forcing YouTube to give greater prominence to content from traditional broadcasters - an idea that has caused fury among content creators, who believe it will mean their videos will be relegated. The idea has been pushed as a solution to online misinformation.

"Forced prominence would impair the public interest, by unfairly shifting focus from independent creators, and by recommending that all our viewers watch the same things, disregarding personal taste," Pina said.

"Forced prominence won't help anyone succeed - not new independent talent, not viewers and definitely not public service media."

Elsewhere, at the festival, Kevin Lygo, ITV's managing director of media and entertainment, criticised YouTube's investment in the UK.

Observing YouTube's recent £3m commitment to investing in the UK's creator economy and TV industries, Lygo said the figure "made him chortle" - ITV will spend an estimated £1.2bn on content this year.

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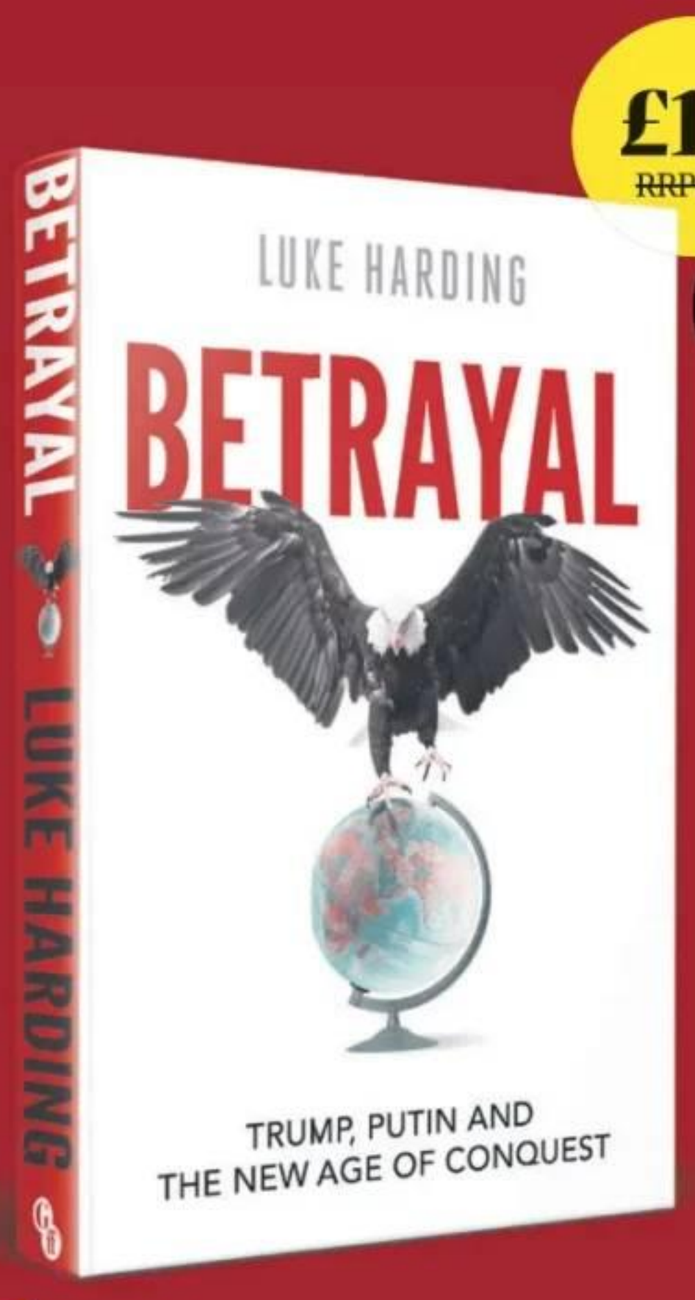

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▼ *Two men aged 23 and 31 were arrested on suspicion of murder in connection with the house fire*

PHOTOGRAPH: OWEN HUMPHREYS/PA

Police not ruling out link to A66 crash after two die in house fire

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

A murder investigation has been launched after two people were killed in a house fire in Middlesbrough, with police not ruling out links to organised crime or Saturday's crash on the A66 that killed seven people including two police officers.

A child was one of those killed in the blaze in the early hours of yesterday and a woman was in a critical condition in hospital. Three other people sustained non-life-threatening injuries. Two men aged 23 and 31 have been arrested on suspicion of murder.

◀ *Flowers are left at the scene in Grangetown for the two victims, one of whom was a child*

PHOTOGRAPH: IAN FORSYTH/GETTY

The developments came as police continued to investigate the wider circumstances around the collision.

Supt Emily Harrison, Redcar and Cleveland's local policing commander, said of the fire: "We continue to work to establish the circumstances of exactly what has happened, but we are keeping an open mind and cannot rule out any links to wider organised crime at this time."

The fire in the Grangetown area was about two miles from the scene of Saturday's collision in which a Volkswagen Passat, travelling in the wrong direction, crashed head-on into a police vehicle on the A66. PC Matthew Blades, 37, and PC Tom Clough, 38, were killed in the collision.

The five occupants of the Volkswagen Passat were also killed. They have been named as Cole Worthy and Theo Rae, both 17, Makai Saddington, 18, and Michael Cahill and Jakub Matusiak, both 23.

Since then Cleveland police said they had "continued to disrupt those suspected of being involved in serious and organised crime". That effort has resulted in 17 arrests.

Wayne Fox, the assistant chief constable responsible for the investigation, said: "This has been a fast-moving and complex investigation, with significant links to serious and organised criminal activity. The events of that tragic night will have a lasting and profound impact on the Cleveland area and the communities we seek to protect."

Cleveland fire brigade said it had sent six fire engines and an incident command unit to the scene of the Grangetown blaze. A spokesperson said road closures were in place in the surrounding area and asked members of the public to avoid the area where possible.

At the scene a 20-year-old neighbour described how people had tried to rescue the occupants of the house. Ellie, who declined to give her surname, said: "The entire house was scorching. I couldn't get near the front of the house, it was that hot."

She described holding the hand of a crying woman who had jumped from an upstairs window, staying with her until paramedics arrived.

Another neighbour, who asked not to be named, said: "My daughter heard shouting and screaming ... the dogs were barking. I don't know the people who live there, we just say hello when we walk past."

Adam Brook, a Redcar and Cleveland borough councillor for Grangetown, said the fire was "absolutely devastating", but urged people not to speculate or "share unconfirmed information".

Police have previously said the five occupants of the Passat may have had links to "serious and organised criminal activity". Four of the five had criminal convictions and were believed to be associated with another car that was seen ramming properties earlier that morning.

Inquests into the deaths of Blades and Clough are due to begin in Middlesbrough this morning, while inquests for the other five people killed are scheduled to open this afternoon.

Palestine Action labelled 'terror group' as US imposes sanctions

Haroon Siddique
Legal affairs correspondent

The US has issued sanctions against the UK-based direct action organisation Palestine Action, describing it as a "transnational terror group".

The US Department of the Treasury yesterday labelled Palestine Action a specially designated global terrorist (SDGT), which allows the US to freeze the assets of foreign individuals and entities.

Palestine Action became the first direct action group to be proscribed under the UK's Terrorism Act in July last year, placing it alongside the likes of Islamic State and Boko Haram. The UK ban is the subject of a legal challenge which will be heard by the UK supreme court in November.

The powers used to sanction the organisation in the US were introduced by the then president, George W Bush, shortly after the 9/11 attacks by al-Qaida.

Announcing the sanctions on Palestine Action and two other organisations, the US treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, said: "Far-left extremists, their fronts and their enablers should be on notice: we will bring the full weight of our economic tools to bear. Political terrorism has no place in our society, and we will continue to cut the financial lifelines of these groups until they are eliminated."

The founder of Palestine Action, Huda Ammori, who is behind the legal challenge to the UK ban, said in response: "Palestine Action's activities in the US and elsewhere have always been about saving lives by disrupting the Israeli war machine, which is committing a genocide in Gaza with the support of the US government. [Donald] Trump has been at the centre of the mass murder of Palestinians, enabling the Zionist regime at every turn.

"The fact that Trump is now taking inspiration from Britain's repression of the movement for Palestinian freedom exposes just how dangerous this ban is and should be a wake-up call to anyone who cares about free speech and civil liberties. By banning a direct action protest group under terrorism legislation for the first time in British history, Keir Starmer's government created a blueprint for authoritarian governments around the world to suppress political dissent, and to criminalise British citizens who travel or live abroad. Trump's decision to adopt Keir Starmer's designation of Palestine Action as a 'terrorist' group should be the final nail in the coffin of this dangerous, draconian and disproportionate ban."

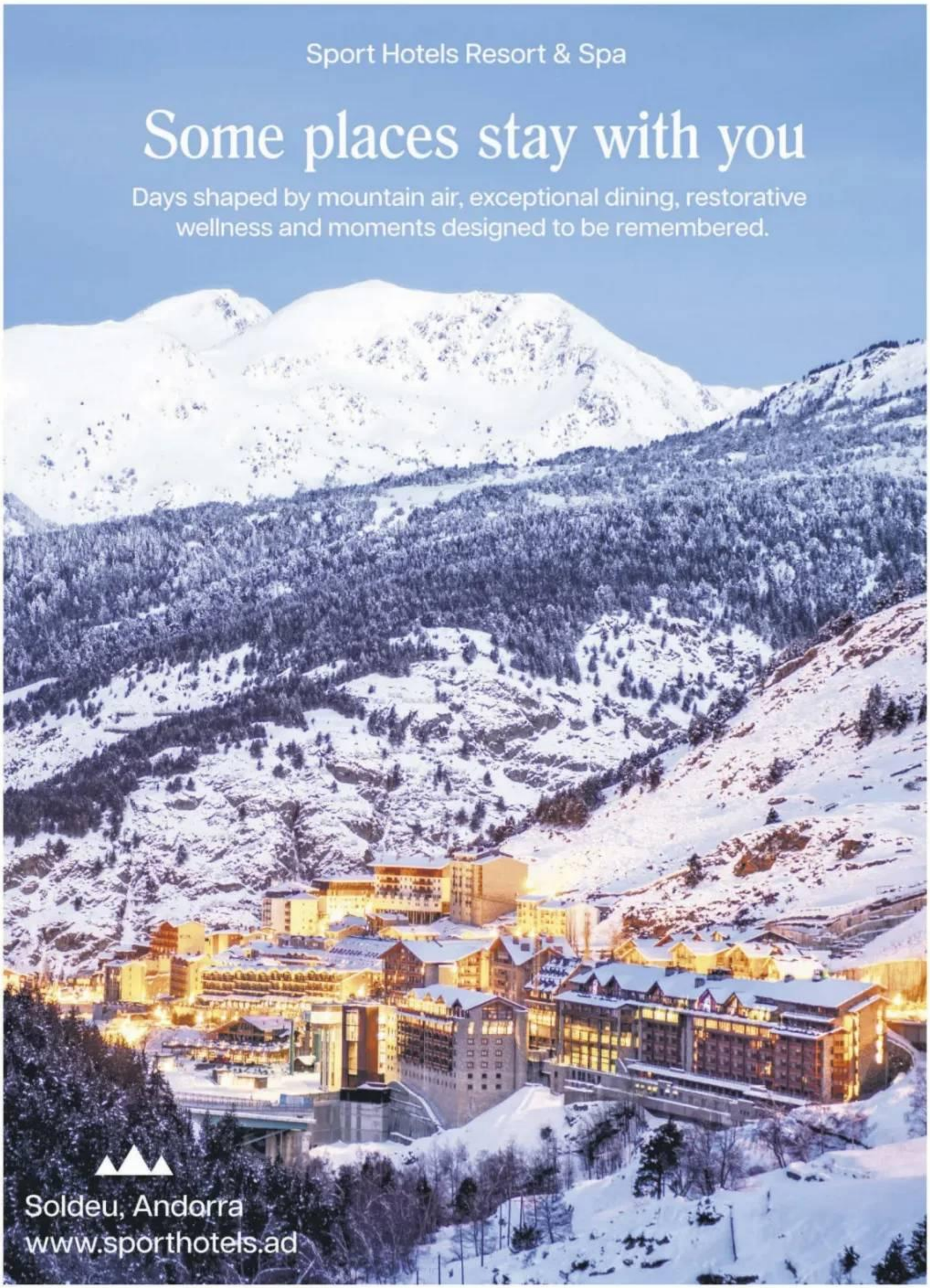
As well as freezing the assets of those sanctioned, the listing forbids US citizens and entities from doing business with them.

The Department of the Treasury website said the group "has supported numerous acts of terrorism since July 2020, including acts that have physically injured UK law enforcement personnel, as well as acts intended to intimidate lawful commercial enterprises and coerce the UK government. The group's actions include multiple high-profile instances of breaking into defence infrastructure and British military installations, and causing millions of dollars' worth of damage."

It said the group had promoted its activities on social media "encouraging the use of similar tactics internationally, including within the United States and along the US-Mexican border".

In the UK, Palestine Action has focused largely on factories run by the Israeli weapons firm Elbit Systems and companies that do business with it. In March last year, protesters targeted Trump's Turnberry golf course on the west coast of Scotland.

Yvette Cooper, who was then the foreign secretary with Starmer as prime minister, moved to ban the group last year after recommendations from officials, who conceded that this would be "relatively novel".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▼ *Teddington Lock on the Thames. The firm says its site in the area is undergoing 'rigorous assessments'*

PHOTOGRAPH: DAN KITWOOD/GETTY IMAGES

Thames Water recycling tests show surge in toxic chemicals

Sandra Laville
Environment correspondent

Levels of a toxic "forever chemical" rose to 13 times the legal limit during Thames Water pilots for a controversial multimillion-pound water recycling scheme that will pump millions of litres of treated sewage into the River Thames during drought.

The data from the pilots is in stark contrast to public comments from Thames Water that their water recycling project in south-west London will not harm the riverine environment.

In technical notes in the company's files for the project, seen by the Guardian, the results from two pilots reveal the recycling system rapidly and significantly increased levels of a particularly toxic type of Pfas chemical, perfluorooctane sulfonate (Pfos) – a suspected carcinogen – breaching the legal limits by as much as 13 times.

As standard wastewater treatment plants are not designed to filter or destroy them, treated and untreated sewage contains Pfas chemicals (short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). They are known as "forever chemicals" because they do not break down in the environment, and their detrimental impact on rivers has been found to be widespread.

New figures show every English water body is polluted with toxic chemicals. They are also considered a threat to human health.

Thames Water's recycling system is intended to provide more water to cope with shortages resulting from both a rising population and predicted droughts.

It involves abstracting up to 75m litres of water a day from the Thames at Teddington, south-west London, when the river is in low flow at times of drought, and replacing it with the same amount of treated sewage from the Mogden treatment plant via a new tunnel into the river. The 75m litres a day is a fraction of the 571m litres of water the company leaks each day.

The results of the company's tests, however, reveal the scale of the treated sewage input would make it very difficult for the water to meet current standards for forever chemicals and pesticides.

Thames Water, which is seeking a development consent order for the scheme, has insisted publicly that the water recycling system – which will cost at least £350m – would not harm the river, its habitats or be a threat to the public.

But the technical note on the pilots shows levels of Pfos rose to 6.3 nanograms per litre in test one and 8.7 nanograms per litre in test two of the recycling technology. The UK legal limit for surface waters is 0.65 nanograms per litre.

The documents show there was a "rapid breakthrough of Pfos" above the legal threshold in less than one month of operation. The company said keeping within legal limits would be "operationally challenging", requiring carbon filters to be frequently regenerated, reactivated and replaced, and "significant additional operational expense".

In addition to the forever chemical, the pilots also showed the treated water contained very high levels of iron, which the document states would have a "significant detrimental impact" on the river.

Ian McNuff, of the campaign group Solar, which opposes the project because of what they say will be irreversible environmental damage to the river, said: "Thames Water described the results for the pilot as 'operationally' challenging.

"In essence, they can't make it work properly. Test failures were rapid, and the idea that they can switch this on and off as a completely reliable asset during drought is unrealistic against current standards."

Costs for the water recycling scheme are already rising for Thames, which is struggling under debts of £20bn and teetering on the brink of a government-handled administration.

The original cost of £350m is now expected to rise to more than £500m, as Thames Water has discovered it needs to install more mechanical pumps within a nature reserve near Teddington, according to sources close to the project.

The Environment Agency (EA) has been given the results of the two pilots carried out by Thames Water. The agency rejected an earlier scheme in 2019 because of the unacceptable impact on the environment of treated effluent.

The project is opposed by the local council and local MPs, including the Liberal Democrat MP Munira Wilson. But as a strategic infrastructure project, it can be pushed through without local consent.

An EA spokesperson said: "We have strict legal requirements in place to protect our rivers from toxic chemicals and the Teddington site will continue to undergo rigorous environmental assessments to ensure these conditions are met before any development work can begin.

"Environmental protection and sustainable development must go hand-in-hand and water recycling projects, combined with new reservoirs, will be critical to securing future water supplies effectivity."

A Thames Water spokesperson said: "The Teddington Direct River Abstraction project will not be allowed to operate without securing an environmental permit from the Environment Agency.

They added: "The data from the pilot plant study is not indicative of what would be released back into the river when the project is operational."

World first as brain tumour is removed with AI assistance

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

Neurosurgeons in London have performed the world's first successful AI-assisted operation to remove a brain tumour, saving the sight of a 48-year-old man, health officials say.

The surgery was performed in May at the National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery, part of University College London hospitals NHS foundation trust, but details were kept secret until today as the patient, Rhys Hibbert, recovered.

▲ *Rhys Hibbert's sight was saved by the surgery and he is back at work*

"When I came round … I could see everything in the room clearly," said Hibbert, who was able to walk independently without glasses or sticks within a week of the surgery. He has since returned to work as a customer service manager. "It feels like I've got a 360-degree panoramic view of everything around me," he said.

The surgical team remained in full control as the AI system analysed live camera footage during the operation, helping identify key structures such as nerves and blood vessels near the 11mm tumour that should be avoided. The technology colour-codes important structures in the brain to help surgeons recognise them safely.

The hospital had previously used the technology as a research tool but the operation was the first time it had been used on a patient. It was used to help remove a tumour on Hibbert's pituitary gland.

During the operation, the AI tool analysed the live surgical feed in real time to highlight structures of the brain. The pituitary gland, blood vessels and nerves controlling vision are tightly packed together and "going a millimetre wrong can make a critical difference", officials said, potentially leading to blindness, stroke or death.

Dr Sophia Bano, an associate professor in robotics and AI at UCL and the technical lead for the AI system, said: "By learning from hundreds of surgical videos, [the tool] has been exposed to a breadth of surgical examples that would take a surgeon many years to encounter. It is designed to help recognise critical anatomy, surgical instruments and tissue interactions in real time, supporting the surgeon during highly delicate procedures."

Prof Mike Lewis, scientific director for innovation at the National Institute for Health and Care Research, which funded the operation as part of a trial, said the "pioneering surgery" highlighted AI's potential to support surgeons and improve patient care.

UK urged to help free woman arrested in Egypt

Mona el-Shazly on her UK-based YouTube channel. She believes her sister's arrest is an attempt to silence her own anti-corruption activism

Patrick Wintour
Diplomatic editor

The Foreign Office has been asked to intervene to secure the release of a British-Egyptian woman who is said to have been arrested in Cairo because of her sister's activism.

Eman el-Shazly, a 45-year-old mother from Birmingham, was arrested on 16 August while visiting Egypt. Her lawyers say she has been detained in an attempt to silence her sister Mona, a relentless critic of the Egyptian government on her UK-based YouTube channel.

Her two brothers have already spent three years in jail and were rearrested in May. They had been held in pre-trial detention, facing charges of "promoting the ideas of a terrorist organisation on social media, as well as broadcasting false news harmful to state security".

The Foreign Office has confirmed to the husband of Eman that she is being held in the Ramadan rehabilitation centre and her case has been given the same file number as her brothers, Hassan and Eid.

The government of President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi has faced allegations that it arrests relatives of political critics to put indirect pressure on the dissidents to end their overseas criticism of his rule or of state corruption. Much of Mona el-Shazly's activism focuses on alleged cases of corruption inside the security services or public utilities, a highly sensitive subject in Egypt.

Arfan Rashid, the lawyer acting for Eman el-Shazly's husband, said she had never been involved in politics and had gone to Cairo two months ago to look after her sick mother.

"There is ample evidence that Eman has been arrested to silence Mona," Rashid said. He added that Eman had told security officials she was no longer in contact with her sister, and that many family members had repeatedly asked her to stop her political activism in the UK.

Mona el-Shazly confirmed to the Guardian that she had been asked to halt her campaign by relatives, including her YouTube videos.

But she added: "I have done nothing wrong nor broken any law ... I am a very strong woman, but it is very traumatic for me since 11 or 12 children are without their parents.

"It is a horrible situation but the Egyptian government will not stop if I appear weak. The government is close to collapsing."

Rashid said the UK government had recognised the practice of "punishment by proxy" in Egypt in a country profile policy and information note published in March

Human Rights Watch campaigners and the House of Commons library both warned in 2021 of an escalating pattern in which Egyptian family members of critics living abroad were being targeted.

Mona el-Shazly runs a YouTube channel in the UK that has 130,000 subscribers. She is also active on X, making specific and controversial claims about government officials.

The Foreign Office team in Cairo has asked for access to see Eman el-Shazly, who has four children, but has not received a positive reply. Her husband, Zeesharn Moustapha, has said Egyptian police and security officers attended the family home where she was staying a few days before the arrest, and demanded that she tell her sister to stop publishing material against the Egyptian government.

On X, Mona el-Shazly has claimed as many as five members of her family have been detained or harassed by the Egyptian authorities.

She wrote: "Kinship is something beyond my family's will, and I invite them to disown me to save themselves from this despicable, illegitimate dictator. I am the one opposing Sisi, not five individuals from my family.

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Green delight sparks nightmare for Labour
The Guardian

Forty children who vanished from asylum hotels still missing, MPs and peers report

Rajeev Syal
Home affairs editor

Forty children who went missing from hotels housing asylum seekers in the UK have still not been found, according to a parliamentary report published today.

Ministers are facing calls from MPs and peers to explain what they are doing to locate those still missing, two of whom are believed to still be under 18. The figure emerged in a report by the joint committee on human rights into how the social care system is failing young adults.

In 2023, it emerged that more than 440 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children had gone missing from Home Office hotels, including some reported to be as young as 12.

The cross-party committee has been told by a witness that 40 of the cohort of missing children have still not been found.

Helen Waite, a director of children's social care at the Department for Education, told the committee in June that 472 children had gone missing in total and 432 had been located.

"Guidance was issued to police from the Home Office, to be shared with local networks, to ensure that we continue to look for those children and that we can surface whether they have been found, and information can be updated to provide more reassurance," she said.

The high court ruled in 2023 that the Home Office's routine use of hotels to house lone child asylum seekers was unlawful. The then Conservative government said: "Due to the unsustainable rise in illegal Channel crossings, the government has had no option but to accommodate young people in hotels on a temporary basis while placements with local authorities are urgently found."

> *'The disappearance of children cannot be allowed to fade from public scrutiny'*
>
> **Patricia Durr**
> *Children's rights activist*

Angela Eagle, in a letter to the committee last year in her then role as border security and asylum minister, said some of those found were "located in exploitative situations and may have been trafficked or victims of other forms of exploitation".

The committee, which published a wider report on children's social care today, said: "We welcome the fact that the majority of missing children have now been found. However, we continue to be extremely concerned about the fact that some children who went missing from asylum hotels in previous years remain missing."

The committee called on the Home Office to "make clear what specific action is being taken to locate these children, to investigate the causes for them going missing, and to avoid unaccompanied asylum-seeking children going missing in the future".

It asked the Home Office to provide an update to the committee every three months "with details of efforts to locate the children who remain missing".

Patricia Durr, the chief executive of Every Child Protected Against Trafficking UK, said: "The government cannot allow the disappearance [of children] to fade from public scrutiny.

"It is a significant child protection failure and we strongly support the committee's call for regular public reporting and greater transparency about what is being done to find those who remain missing, understand why so many children disappeared, and ensure this can never happen again."

It was announced this month that a further 13 hotels housing asylum seekers had closed, following Labour's pledge to stop using asylum hotels by the next election.

Ministers are increasing their use of more "basic" sites such as former military barracks, and the most recent closures are expected to save taxpayers £51m and bring the total number of asylum hotels below 160, down from a peak of about 400 under the Conservatives.

The Home Office was contacted for comment.

Comedy review

Tremendous oomph from a future star

Jess Fuchs: Feral
Pleasance Courtyard, Edinburgh
★★★★☆

Brian Logan

Jess Fuchs is an effervescing chatterbox of a comic, firing off tart remarks, home truths and off-colour comments

"No hugging, no learning" was the writers' rule on Seinfeld. Jess Fuchs decrees a similar stricture for Feral, in which she will learn nothing about herself whatsoever. "Really, I'm just here to talk shit." That might get proceedings off to an underwhelming start, save that the Aussie's cynical shtick is delivered with tremendous oomph: a bracing celebration of unsentimentality from an act who tells it straight about her body, her single life and a trip to Ireland, where she finds her soulmate in the form of a long-sunk ship.

It's one of those debuts that announces a fully formed standup. Cocooned in black feathers, Fuchs is an effervescing chatterbox of a comic, firing off tart remarks, home truths and off-colour comments. Arrogant yet quick to laugh at herself, the audience love her, as she pursues a Bridgerton-inspired breast enlargement, expounds on "pretty privilege" and writhes in horror at the thought of dating a 45-year-old (she's 32). Her mum and sister play entertaining offstage roles, and there's a wickedly unexpected joke about the relative merits, when dating, of seeking consent versus reading the room.

If you can parse all this for anything serious, it would be Fuchs's relationship with her own body, described to this descendant of Holocaust survivors as "the type to survive war and famine" – and about which our host is admirably plain-speaking. Less serious, but very likable, is Fuchs's "over-identifying with the ship" on a visit to the Titanic museum in County Cork – before a clifftop walk goes wrong in the show's final chapter.

Perhaps because it finds our host more vulnerable and less imperious, that closing set-piece isn't quite as distinctive as the earlier firecracking cattiness. As for the Titanic as a metaphor for Fuchs's life – well, good luck to the iceberg who gets in her way.

Until 30 August

Stage review

Retold Homer with defiant wife at its heart

Penelope
Underbelly Cowgate, Edinburgh
★★★★☆

Mark Fisher

She is played by Anne Hathaway in Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey and is the central figure in Margaret Atwood's The Penelopiad. Here, she is alone with her thoughts in a seductive song cycle by Alex Bechtel. Penelope is played by the Broadway actor Grace McLean, who brings vocal and emotional range to the part. Drily witty, defiant and elegant, she is the wife of Odysseus, doggedly hanging on for his return after the Trojan war.

A dramatic challenge presents itself here: there can be little action for a character whose principal function is to wait. But, with a book credited to Bechtel, McLean and the director, Eva Steinmetz, things tick along for most of the hour. Only a song towards the end, in which Penelope looks back to her early romance with Odysseus, seems to tread water.

"This is why people don't follow politics," quips McLean, having explained the ins and outs of the Trojan war. The sassy facade slips as she rages at the waiting, before revealing a tender side in a song of prayer and sacrifice. It is a striking performance not only of vocal control but also physical presence.

Until 30 August

We Will Always
LOVE
YOU

ourse Black Lives Matter.

DOLLY
Par ton Street
Exit
Broadway
Nassau
9/11 Memorial
Brooklyn &
Queens
A
Exp to Lefferts Blvd or Far Rkwy.
PM rush hrs also to Rockaway Pk.
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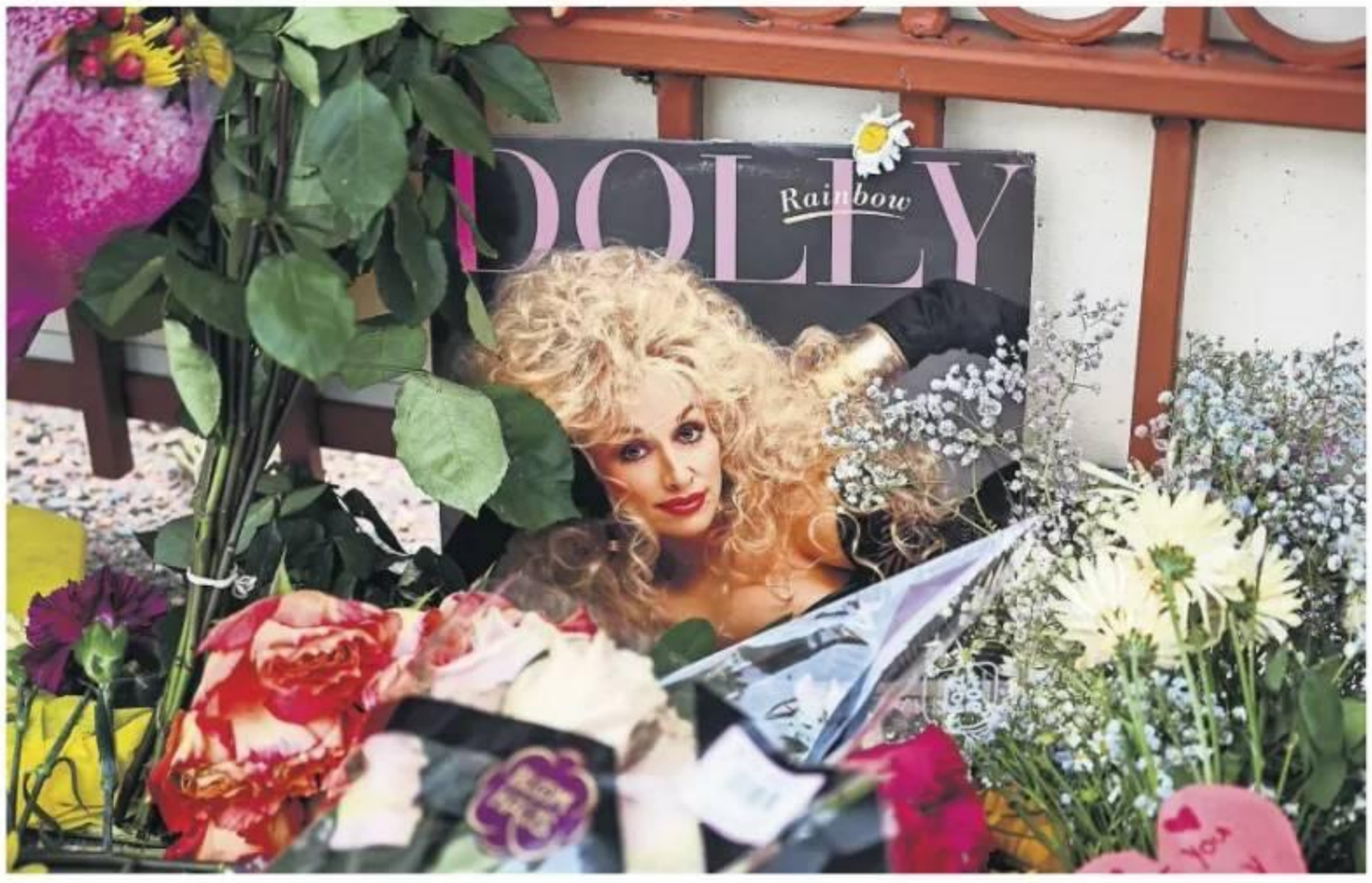
DOLLY
Rainbow

DOLLY PARTO
1946 - 2026
Queen of Coun

Dolly's world
The death of Dolly Parton, announced on Tuesday, has prompted tributes and mourning across the US and beyond. Clockwise from main: a mural in Nashville becomes a place of reflection; the Castro Theatre in San Francisco honours the singer; flags at half mast in Washington DC; a 10-minute tribute is screened in Piccadilly Circus, London; flowers and messages outside Parton's office in Nashville; a New York subway sign is adapted into a tribute; a Dolly impersonator arrives with flowers at the gates of Parton's home in Brentwood, Tennessee.

Life & Arts
Cover story →

PHOTOGRAPHS: GEORGE WALKER/AP; DAN HERNANDEZ/AP; FINN GOMEZ/GETTY; SIMON ACKERMAN/GETTY; CHANDAN KHANNA/ GETTY; ANGELA WEISS/ GETTY AND RAY DI PIETRO/SHUTTERSTOCK

World

'Women were in pain but crying and begging everyone to help them to rescue their children'

Alamzaib Khan *Witness*

A man carries the body of a baby after the fire, which is believed to have been started by a faulty air conditioning unit on a ward

PHOTOGRAPH: AAMIR QURESHI/AFP/GETTY

At least 14 newborn babies die in fire at Pakistan hospital's maternity ward

Shah Meer Baloch *Islamabad*
Hannah Ellis-Petersen *Delhi*

At least 14 newborn babies have died in a fire that broke out in the maternity ward at one of Pakistan's most prominent state hospitals.

The blaze began in the early hours of yesterday and engulfed the ward at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, the biggest state hospital in Islamabad.

A statement by the hospital administration confirmed that 14 newborn babies in the intensive care unit (ICU) died in the fire.

Dr Aneeza Jalil, a hospital spokesperson, told the Dawn newspaper that 15 babies were on the ward at the time and that one baby was saved by a doctor.

Women who had just given birth had to run down several flights of stairs and climb out of windows and down ladders to escape.

The health minister, Mustafa Kamal, said many of the babies were in incubators or on oxygen, and that the canisters made the fire worse.

Investigators said the fire was started by a faulty air conditioning unit, which exploded inside the nursery where newborn infants under intensive care were sleeping.

Among the witnesses was Sardar Atti ur Rehman, 38, whose wife had given birth to a girl at the hospital the previous day. He had been sleeping at the hospital and rushed into the maternity ward as the fire was spreading, desperately looking for his wife and child.

He described scenes of panic as thick smoke filled the ward. "I could not see my family, including my newborn baby, in the room but kept searching," he said. "My heart was heavy." He later discovered they had both escaped the fire alive.

He said he saw a woman laid out on a stretcher and helped to drag her out of the ward, but other women refused to leave as they cried out for their babies.

"I saw a mother who was crying and screaming for her child who was admitted inside the ICU," he said. "I tried to enter the ICU but failed as the smoke was too thick. I could not see anything and I was facing issues to breathe. I begged her that you need to save yourself and we will look for the child later."

Rehman said there were few staff on the ward at the time of the fire and that the families were left to fend for themselves.

One father at the scene, whose newborn son was among the dead, claimed that there had been a lock on the door of the nursery and that no staff had been present to unlock it. The windows of the nursery were smashed by rescuers as they tried to reach the babies.

Sohail Ashraf, the Islamabad chief commissioner, said the emergency call was made just before 7am, and rescue and police teams reached the scene quickly.

The hospital administration said: "The fire was immediately brought under control, and the children were immediately shifted to the intensive care unit."

Alamzaib Khan, 26, was also among those who tried to run into the ward as it burned. His wife had given birth to a girl two days ago and she was still in the hospital recovering from a caesarean section, while his baby had already been taken home.

▲ *Police at the nursery's windows, broken as rescuers tried to get in*

"I was sleeping on the pavement when I heard people screaming and wailing," he said. "I ran towards the ICU and children's ward and I saw my wife while climbing down a ladder."

After checking on his wife, he tried to help with the rescue of others. "The moment I approached the children's ward, I couldn't see anything because the smoke was so thick," he said. "I tried to go inside but it was not possible."

He added: "People were crying, screaming and asking for help. Women from the operation room had to run for their lives. Women were in pain themselves but crying and begging everyone to help them to rescue their children. It's hard to describe this terrible moment."

The prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, directed authorities to conduct an immediate investigation into the incident, which was one of the deadliest hospital fires in years.

"Such a situation involving children is irreparable," Sharif said. "Those responsible should be identified, and the strictest action should be taken."

Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari, expressed condolences to the families of the babies. He said the loss of lives was heartbreaking.

Breaking badly
Raygun opens up on 2024 Paris Olympics
Page 26

Feeding Gaza
Farmers killed trying to sustain agriculture
Page 29

▲ *Yalda Moaiery's photo of a woman at a protest in Tehran was used by Donald Trump in 2019, drawing criticism from the photographer, below*

Iran seeks to criminalise all contact with foreign journalists

Deepa Parent

Iran has taken the first step towards criminalising contact with foreign media in a move human rights groups have said attempts to "sever the entire Iranian society from the rest of the world".

For journalists, researchers and ordinary citizens, the proposed law being discussed by lawmakers could potentially make speaking to international audiences a criminal act and restrict coverage of events such as January's anti-regime protests.

Even social media platforms such as Instagram and X that the regime considered to be "financed" by another country would fall under the law, said Moein Khazaeli, a human rights lawyer at Dadban, a legal counselling centre for Iranian activists.

"It means any kind of interview, contact or sending photographs to [foreign media or organisations] could lead to six months' to two years' imprisonment.

"Any contact with foreign media could be considered a crime if one doesn't inform the intelligence ministry beforehand," he said.

Recent examples of the risks facing Iranian journalists include the case of Yalda Moaiery, an acclaimed photographer who was sentenced this month in Tehran to 15 years in prison for documenting the US-Israeli war.

Though Moaiery was charged under the espionage law introduced after last year's 12-day war between Iran and Israel, Khazaeli said the new bill signalled a broader effort to regulate and punish contact between Iranians and foreign media and institutions.

"It could move [Iran] to a North Korea kind of situation," he said.

Moaiery, 44, has spent two decades covering the harsh realities faced by people in Iran, including the nationwide Woman, Life, Freedom protests in 2022 and the anti-regime protests that led to thousands being killed in January.

She came to international prominence in 2019 after criticising Donald Trump's use of one of her photos of a woman at a demonstration near Tehran University, saying Trump's sanctions were damaging Iranian lives, including those of her friends and family. "This image shows my people and is for my people, and shouldn't be abused by these men in Washington," she wrote.

Now, in a cruel irony, Moaiery said she had been sentenced in absentia for her work covering the US-Israeli war in Iran and accused of media activity deemed to strengthen and aid Israel and the US.

"I have been a critic of Israel and its policies all my life. I am not an Israel supporter. And I have always been a critic of American politics," she told the Guardian.

Moaiery was arrested and sentenced to eight years in prison in 2022 but later received an amnesty. This time she fears her sentence could be upheld and she might be jailed.

"Of course, I am scared," she said. "The only thing that I'm worried about is wasting my life if I have to be there for 15 years. When I get out, I'll be 60 years old."

Russia Scramble to find fuel after Kyiv widens strikes on refineries

Peter Beaumont
Senior international correspondent

A shadow fleet tanker, subject to sanctions, carries oil from the Nato member Turkey to a Russian Baltic port. A deal is signed for Russian oil to be processed in Kazakhstan. Fuel cargoes arrive from India via Egypt. The Kremlin puts pressure on allies to sell it badly needed fuel.

The data points may be diverse, but they point to a single inescapable conclusion.

In the space of a summer, Russia, once the world's second largest producer of crude oil, has been plunged into a desperate scramble to find sources of petrol to plug the ever-growing holes in its domestic refining capacity as Ukraine widens attacks on its refineries.

In recent weeks the Kremlin has attempted to tap a widening number of sources to alleviate an energy crisis that has led to queues of cars and rationing at filling stations as the oil processing plants that usually supply them are set ablaze in long-range drone attacks.

For the first time, Russia this week bought a shipment of 200,000 barrels of petrol from Turkey, currently being shipped from Mersin to the Baltic port of Primorsk via a tanker, the Wendrix, that is subject to sanctions. It is the fifth confirmed seaborne delivery of vehicle fuel this summer, following previous shipments via Egypt from a refinery in India, amounting in total to 1m barrels.

Russia's increasingly frantic efforts to find fresh sources have not been confined to its shadow fleet. This week it also signed a deal with the Kondensat oil refinery in the West Kazakhstan region to process Russian crude, under which % of the refined fuel would be shipped back to Russia. According to reports, oil will need to be delivered to the refinery by rail as the facility is not connected to a Russian pipeline.

This summer has also seen massive increases in the amount of fuel that Russia imports from its Ukraine war ally Belarus. Imports this June had risen by a factor of 141 in comparison with June 2025.

Kremlin officials had expressed hope earlier in the summer it might be turning a corner in its fuel crisis. Instead, August has brought a new intensification. At least six Russian regions have reinstated or tightened restrictions on petrol sales and a new wave of Ukrainian strikes on oil processing facilities succeeded, among attacks on other targets, in forcing the complete shutdown of the Orsk refinery.

Alexander Novak, Russia's deputy prime minister, who in July said Russia would begin importing oil products to help stabilise the domestic market, this week described the country's energy situation as "constantly changing", adding that some refineries were back in operation. "We're constantly monitoring it and are making decisions at our headquarters. We're gathering the federal headquarters with the regions and all of our companies twice a week," he said.

The aim of Kyiv's campaign is to bring the cost of the Ukraine war back to Moscow.

In the midst of an international sanctions regime that has already damaged Russia's economy, the Ukrainian strikes on refineries - which have intensified in the last two months - are not only hitting a source of revenue that has been used to pay for Vladimir Putin's war but have prompted domestic shortages that even the latest efforts appear unable to mitigate.

Ukraine has this month already carried out 18 attacks on Russian refineries, matching the previous month's record. That follows a decline in Russian refinery output - even before the campaign against Russian refineries began stepping up - of 28%, according to oil industry analysts.

Writing in June, Mick Ryan, a former Australian general, predicted Ukraine would only increase its efforts to hit Russian oil production. "Putin has never retreated, in public, from his maximalist ambition to subjugate Ukraine. The strikes are not designed to change his rhetoric; they are designed to change his calculus," he wrote.

That was echoed last month in a commentary for the Royal United Services Institute by Petras Katinas and Natia Seskuria. "Ukraine's sustained strikes on Russian refineries are not only damaging infrastructure and squeezing Russia's oil industry, they are forcing the Kremlin to spend more to keep fuel flowing at home while earning less from exports. That trade-off is becoming increasingly expensive ... Export restrictions prevent refiners from selling into higher-priced foreign markets, reducing foreign-currency earnings while limiting companies' ability to recover costs at home."

◀ *The Gazprom Neft oil refinery in Moscow was hit by Ukrainian drones in June. Russian fuel imports have risen massively this summer*

PHOTOGRAPH: AFP/ GETTY IMAGES

Mocked Olympian: my dance was not as bad as I thought

▲ *Rachel Gunn, centre, in the documentary charting her journey from her zero-point breakdance appearance for Australia at the Paris Olympics in 2024, left, to appreciation of her achievement* PHOTOGRAPHS: NETFLIX; JOHN WALTON/PRESS ASSOCIATION

Jack Larkin

Rachael "Raygun" Gunn says her performance at the 2024 Paris Olympics was "not as bad as I thought" after the breakdancer revealed she had finally watched back the moment that catapulted her to international fame - and mockery.

The Sydney academic turned speaker was Australia's first Olympic breakdancer and became a viral sensation after her unconventional routine at Paris 2024, where she did not receive a single point from the judges.

In an interview with CNN published yesterday, Gunn explained her reaction to instant global notoriety.

"When I went viral, it was surreal. It made me feel kind of sick in the stomach - this sense of dread. I just thought: 'Surely, this is not actually happening. Surely, this is a weird, egotistical dream I'm having where I think my face is spread around the world.' It was a really strange experience," she told the network.

Speaking about the forthcoming Netflix documentary, Untold Raygun: Breaking Badly, Gunn said she had enough distance from the Games to process the day and its impact on her mental health.

"Paris is now just a part of my story," she told CNN. "For me, it's more about radical acceptance of everything that's happened and just one foot in front of the other, just trying to move ahead."

In an interview in 2024, Gunn said she had only seen "little bits and pieces" of her performance. Speaking to CNN this week, she revealed that she had since watched it in full.

"I can't remember why, but I ended up watching it and I was like, 'Oh, it's not as bad as I thought!'" she said.

Gunn also reflected on what she had learned from the experience, saying: "I do think that we put in a little bit too much credence in online reactions. But online is not the real world. I get absolutely rubbished online, but I get a very, very different response in person. It's a completely different experience. Maybe we need to reframe [ending up online] as a badge of honour that you've actually done something interesting."

She also compared the treatment of female Olympians with their male counterparts.

"I think female athletes are under more scrutiny. They just are. It's in terms of how they perform, what they wear, what their body shape is - they're too muscly, they're not muscly enough, they're too chubby, they're too skinny."

The global reaction to Raygun included the comedian Rachel Dratch dressing up as the breaker on the Jimmy Fallon show, while Australia's prime minister, Anthony Albanese, praised the former cultural studies academic for having "a crack".

A proposed show, Raygun: The Musical, created by Steph Broadbridge, was cancelled by the breakdancer's legal team, who sent notices to the production. "They were worried I was damaging her brand, which I would never do," Broadbridge said in 2024.

In an earlier statement, Gunn's legal team said: "While we have immense respect for the credible work and effort that has gone into the development of the show, we must take steps to safeguard Rachael's creative rights and the integrity of her work."

French flight attendant wins court case linking breast cancer to job

Agence France-Presse
Paris

A flight attendant has had her breast cancer recognised as an occupational disease, a first for France's aviation industry, according to her lawyer and union officials.

The ruling, which decided that Sophie Lainault, a former flight attendant for Air France, had frequently worked at night and been exposed to passive smoking, could pave the way for similar claims.

Lainault, from Anglet near Bayonne in south-west France, told reporters that she hoped her legal victory would help other women.

"It is truly my dearest wish that this opens the way for other women who might not have dared until now," the 59-year-old said.

Now in remission from cancer, Lainault said she was employed by Air France, the country's flag carrier, between 1989 and 2019.

She started work as a flight attendant and later became a purser on long-haul flights, accumulating more than 12,600 flight hours, including more than 6,500 at night.

The ruling, which was made by a court in Bayonne in early July, recognised the occupational origin of Lainault's cancer.

The court highlighted the role of night work, exposure to ionising radiation and passive smoking. Smoking was permitted on Air France flights until 2000.

Two regional committees responsible for recognising occupational diseases had concluded that no link had been established.

Breast cancer is not included in France's official list of occupational diseases, meaning that obtaining recognition can be a lengthy and difficult ordeal for patients.

Lainault said she had fought for two and a half years for the recognition, supported by the CFDT trade union. She said the ruling would allow her to take early retirement.

Her lawyer, Elisabeth Leroux, said the court decision had set a legal precedent and was final, with no appeal having been lodged.

Some studies have suggested that women who regularly work night shifts may face a higher risk of developing cancer.

Air France said it "was not a party to the proceedings and had not been informed of the court's reasoning".

The airline added: "The health and safety of employees at work is an absolute priority."

In 2023, a French nurse who had worked night shifts for 28 years and been exposed to radiation succeeded in having her breast cancer recognised as an occupational disease.

With nearly 13,000 deaths each year, the disease is the deadliest cancer among women in France.

'Escape wizard' who has broken out of four jails arrested in Spain

Sam Jones
Madrid

Police in Spain have arrested a dangerous Albanian criminal nicknamed the "escape wizard", who has managed to break out of four jails in Italy and Belgium by sawing through bars, clambering down knotted sheets and even using a human pyramid to breach prison walls.

The fugitive, who has not been officially named, was arrested after officers from Spain's Policía Nacional discovered he was living in the north-eastern city of Tarragona and was the subject of a European arrest warrant issued by Italian authorities.

Spanish police identified the man by the initials TT, which correspond to those of Toma Taulant, an Albanian known in the Italian media as the *mago della fuga* (escape wizard).

Before escaping from a maximum-security prison in Milan eight months ago he was serving a prison sentence, due to end in 2048, for offences including violent robbery, theft and drug dealing, according to Italian media reports cited by Agence France-Presse.

"It sounds like something out of a film, but sometimes reality is stranger than fiction," the Policía Nacional said in a statement, which described him as "the master of escapes".

"He escaped from a jail in [the Umbrian city of] Terni in 2009, from a jail in Parma in 2013, and from a Belgian prison that same year after using a human pyramid to climb over the wall," the police said. "His latest escape, in December 2025, came after he managed to break out of a maximum-security prison in Italy after sawing through the bars and climbing out of the window down knotted sheets." The statement said the "very dangerous" fugitive was arrested in Tarragona on Friday.

▲ *Spanish police said they arrested the suspect in Tarragona on Friday*

Once in custody, the man was found to be in possession of fake identity documents, which revealed he had a criminal record in the Catalan city of Girona for possession of weapons and explosives.

He was also found to be carrying two €500 banknotes that are thought to have been counterfeit. The suspect was denied bail and has been remanded in custody in Tarragona while he awaits extradition to Italy.

A supporter of Ulrich Siegmund, the far-right frontrunner in Saxony-Anhalt state elections, wears his AfD party campaign image. Yet in the city of Dessau-Roßlau, birthplace of Bauhaus, Rima al-Ahmad, above, says its spirit is still alive

PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

Bauhaus battlefield

Germany's far right lays out vision for 'patriotic' culture

Deborah Cole
Dessau-Roßlau

The city of Dessau, where the Bauhaus design school flourished a century ago, catapulted Germany into the modern era and revolutionised global design. It is also where the Nazis drove the avant garde movement out of town and tried to crush its utopian principles. A hundred years later, another high-stakes culture war is looming.

The EU's biggest democracy will face one of the riskiest tests of the postwar period when Dessau's home state of Saxony-Anhalt goes to the polls on 6 September. In what would be a first since Adolf Hitler's time, a far-right party could win an absolute majority and take power in one of the 16 *länder*.

The Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is running first in national polls and is poised to win about 40% in Saxony-Anhalt. It has widened its double-digit lead among the state's 1.8 million voters by homing in on the cost of living, fears around immigration and the twin effects of deindustrialisation and depopulation.

But the party's programme also lays out a vision for Germany with Saxony-Anhalt as a foothold, in a plan oddly fixated on Bauhaus.

"The state government is running an image campaign called 'think modern' that seeks to derive the identity of Saxony-Anhalt from Bauhaus," reads one passage. The AfD says it is countering with "a 'think German' campaign" that promises a "new, patriotic cultural policy" and an end to funding for "anti-German art and culture".

Bauhaus blended form and function in architecture, art and industrial design and was also a hive of sexual liberation, new roles for women and international collaboration before the Nazis drove its "degenerates" into exile.

In her modest office at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, its director, Barbara Steiner, said that much like a century ago, the AfD's anti-Bauhaus crusade was a Trojan horse aiming for the heart of Germany's open, liberal society. "There would be a lot of people leaving the state" if the AfD took control, said Austrian-born Steiner. She argued the region was underestimated by its purported champions and their "absurd" war on a warped vision of Bauhaus.

"People are always talking about how everything's going down the drain, but the people here are brilliant," she said. "What is now so tenderly sprouting will be snuffed out by this rigidity and isolation."

While her own institution would probably face funding cuts, her bigger worries concern the chilling effects on public debate, cooperation and innovation. "They want cultural hegemony. That's the really threatening thing."

Today Dessau-Roßlau, as the city has been known since a municipal consolidation in 2007, is dominated by the prefab communist-era housing blocks hulking over gutted brick warehouses. And on nearly every lamp-post, an AfD poster hangs with the promise "Our year".

The sprawling Bauhaus campus and museum, which opened in 2019, attract tens of thousands of visitors each year. But city officials say tourism will never lift the economy out of the doldrums. Unemployment sits at 10%, against 8% across the state and 6% at the national level. Household income in Saxony-Anhalt is near the bottom of the German table.

With an average age above 50, Dessau-Roßlau is one of the country's most geriatric cities. Its population has shrunk to 75,000 from 130,000 in 1990, the year Germany reunified, driven by an exodus led by highly educated young women. The AfD says it wants to repopulate Saxony-Anhalt using lavish family subsidies with unclear funding, while freeing up potential by "liberating" Germans from shame over the Holocaust.

Authorities classify the national party as suspected extremist and the Saxony-Anhalt chapter as confirmed extremist, meaning it poses a threat to democracy. Its flag-bearer is Ulrich Siegmund, a telegenic regional MP with reported ties to known neo-Nazis. Siegmund attended an infamous meeting in 2023 to discuss a "remigration" plan for mass deportations.

At a debate on Dessau's outskirts, the mainstream parties pleaded with voters to consider the consequences of backing the AfD. Despite both belonging to the Christian Democratic Union, the state premier, Sven Schulze, did not make a single reference to the historically unpopular chancellor, Friedrich Merz.

Schulze, the only candidate with a chance of standing in the way of the AfD, accused the party of selling snake oil on growth, jobs and borders. "Even if the day after tomorrow all women decide they're only there for babymaking, as some [parties] seem to want, that won't solve the problem," he said. "We will also need people from abroad in the coming years, particularly in the care sector and in hospitals."

Tobias Rausch, who has been in the state parliament for the AfD since 2016, brushed off questions about the legality of its calls for mass expulsions of asylum seekers. "We want to rescue the country from the old parties and finally make policies for the people," he said. "We don't just want to change things in Saxony-Anhalt but also at the national level."

Armin Willingmann, a veteran Social Democrat, appealed to a sense of pride in regional accomplishments. "This is a place of exceptional cultural significance - our global culture," he said. "We really must be careful not to shut the door, not to adopt Herr Rausch's quite crude policy of isolationism."

Undecided voters said they appreciated local patriotism but that the politicians seemed to be talking past economic realities.

"If the economy is blossoming here, why is there no money to be found anywhere?" said Ruth Schulze, in her 60s and no relation to the CDU candidate. "I was born and bred in Dessau and don't want to speak ill of it - but the lack of money really is the No 1 issue. Schulze runs an advertising agency and is struggling with overheads.

Maria Karius, a 40-year-old teacher, said the far right had come to be seen as a normal part of the political landscape as frustration with mainstream parties festered. Despite a 15% drop in the Dessau crime rate last year, she said there was a perception that public spaces weren't safe. "It's always the same. That's fertile ground for the AfD."

While the debate's tone often sounded resigned, back in town there were still some echoes of Bauhaus's revolutionary esprit.

Rima al-Ahmad, who came to Dessau a decade ago to study design, works in a shared community space for artists and creators called VorOrt. It was conceived of as a "cultural anchor" for German and international students drawn to courses rooted in Bauhaus traditions. "It can be hard to find your place here if you come from outside," she said.

On a tour of its printmaking workshop, recording studio and lush community garden, al-Ahmad, 32, born to a Syrian father and a German mother, described the project as a kind of resistance against her state's increasingly "notorious" image. "I was born in Saxony-Anhalt and for me, this is home," she said. "It has beautiful places and great, just normal people, regardless of the far right."

Asked what the Bauhaus pioneers would think of VorOrt, she smiled: "I think they'd like that the experimental spirit is being carried forward here."

'The people here are brilliant. What is now so tenderly sprouting will be snuffed out by this rigidity and isolation'

Barbara Steiner
Bauhaus Dessau Foundation

Trump's choice wins primary for South Carolina senate seat

George Chidi
Columbia, South Carolina

South Carolina voters have chosen Darline Graham as the Republican nominee for the US Senate seat long held by her late brother, Lindsey.

With Donald Trump's full-throated support, she overcame concern about her lack of legislative experience to beat Ralph Norman, a five-term congressman, in a special primary runoff on Tuesday.

With nearly all the ballots counted, Graham had received 52.4% of the vote, according to the Associated Press, ahead of Norman's 47.6%.

Lindsey Graham, a US senator for more than two decades, won the party's primary in June, but died last month. Days later, Darline was appointed to serve the remainder of her brother's Senate term.

"The critics say I shouldn't run for the Senate," she told a rally audience last Friday. "They say I'm not a politician. You know what I say? Guilty as charged."

She will face the Democratic party nominee, Annie Andrews, in November. The Charleston-area paediatric doctor faces steep odds: the last Democrat to win a statewide race in South Carolina was the state superintendent Jim Rex in 2006.

Trump recommended the appointment of Graham, a career civil servant who was head of South Carolina's Commission for the Blind, and encouraged her to run for a full term – upending a Republican scramble to select a new Senate nominee.

She advanced to the runoff from a 10-strong field that included two congressmen and a former South Carolina governor. "What I really want you to do is pretend – please – that I'm on the ballot," Trump said at a rally in Myrtle Beach on Friday. "Just come and vote."

Trump's Maga Inc fundraising committee spent more than $800,000 (£590,000) on helping Graham, who spent the last week of the unusually short campaign dealing with a gaffe made at a debate.

Asked whether Taiwan and the South China Sea were national security issues, she said she was "not that informed on national security … but I do support the military".

Some Republican voters saw that as evidence that she was not prepared for the role. Others dismissed the issue as media spin. "Who is going to back Trump?" said Bill Bullard from Conway, near Myrtle Beach, who, along with his wife, Linda, voted for Graham. "Who is going to support Trump? It's just that simple."

Horry County, home to Myrtle Beach, proved decisive in the race. Norman won the northernmost counties of South Carolina – his base – but not by enough to counter the strength of Myrtle Beach and the coastal communities that have been surging in population and have less political loyalty to the state's political apparatus than they have to Trump.

Norman, a member of the far-right House Freedom caucus, is ranked by Heritage Action and other conservative organisations as one of Congress's most conservative members. In the days after the January 6 riot at the US Capitol, Norman texted Trump's chief of staff, urging the president to declare martial law to stop Joe Biden taking office.

In the whirlwind campaign to replace Lindsey Graham, Norman exploited hard-right themes, including calling for Anthony Fauci, a former director of the National Institutes of Health, to be jailed.

His campaign sought to cast Graham as a creation of the Washington elite and himself as the true heir to South Carolina's Maga legacy.

But many of Trump's most ardent supporters in South Carolina remembered that, in 2023, Norman endorsed Nikki Haley, a former South Carolina governor, over Trump in her candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination.

A deluge – by South Carolinian standards – of negative advertising suggested that Norman had bucked Trump on border security, a charge he says mischaracterised his position.

▶ *Darline Graham after winning the nomination for the Senate seat long held by her late brother, Lindsey*
PHOTOGRAPH: MEGAN VARNER/GETTY IMAGES

▲ *Dan J Sullivan (left) is challenging Senator Dan S Sullivan (right)*

Alaska voters see double as Dan Sullivan stands against Dan Sullivan

Chris Stein

The Republican senator Dan S Sullivan will be joined on the November ballot in Alaska by a challenger with a nearly identical name from the same party, election officials confirmed on Tuesday, adding a twist to what is expected to be one of the most hotly contested races in the midterms.

The senator is running for a third term against the Democrat Mary Peltola, a former US House representative who polls show is neck and neck with Sullivan in a state that has not sent a Democrat to the Senate since 2008.

Alaska holds nonpartisan primaries in which the four candidates who receive the most votes advance to the general election.

The Associated Press reported that with 85% of the ballots counted, Dan J Sullivan, a retired school teacher and US Forest Service employee running as a Republican, would appear on the ballot alongside the incumbent Dan S Sullivan and Peltola, with a fourth candidate yet to be announced.

The other Sullivan entered the race earlier this year, with the incumbent senator condemning him as a "sham" candidate running at the behest of Democrats to confuse his supporters and split their votes.

In June, Alaska election officials disqualified Dan J Sullivan from the election, but the state supreme court ordered that he be restored.

The two were listed next to each other among the 16 candidates on primary ballots, but the senator had "registered Republican" and "incumbent" next to his name, while his similarly named challenger was unadorned.

It is unclear how much of a threat Dan J Sullivan may pose to the senator's chances of winning re-election. His 2.5% of the vote is much less than the more than 48% received by Peltola and the 42% that Senator Sullivan won in last week's primary.

Alaska uses ranked-choice voting for general elections for congressional offices, raising the possibility that residents who want to vote for the senator but are confused by the similar names can rank both, with their votes likely to wind up going to the incumbent.

All immigrant visa applications halted as US restrictions tighten

Gabrielle Canon

All US immigrant visa applications have been paused by the Trump administration as the state department moves to tighten restrictions and limit access to applicants who they deem could end up relying on US assistance, a state department official has confirmed.

The agency launched the initiative at all embassies and consulates in early August, and visa appointments had to be adjusted to accommodate "in-depth training", according to the official. The state department has been working on updated guidance and training since early this year "to ensure all consular officers are fully equipped to evaluate every visa applicant comprehensively and consistently", they added.

The Financial Times reported that applicants with interviews already scheduled were sent emails that their appointments had been cancelled and that they would be informed of a new date and time.

Agency officials claim this will ensure visa applicants will not end up relying on US public benefits. But it is part of a slate of strategies the Trump administration has employed to crack down on both lawful and undocumented immigration and create a more selective process for who can gain entry into the system.

This week the Trump administration also announced plans to revoke visas from asylum seekers who initially entered the country for tourism or business. Up to 200,000 people currently seeking asylum could be affected. The action is being taken in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security.

The pause on new visas follows an attempt by Trump to block applications on a similar "public charge" basis, which included a block on applications from 75 countries named by the administration. This ban was recently overturned by a federal judge.

"The court made clear that immigration laws cannot be used to justify discrimination," Joanna Cuevas Ingram, senior staff attorney at the National Immigration Law Center, said in a statement last week. "We will continue to hold this administration accountable to its obligations under the law."

200,000
Number who may be hit by move to revoke visas of asylum seekers who entered US for tourism or business

In February, a federal judge overturned the president's attempt to suspend the US refugee system entirely. Federal agents, under Trump, have been allowed to block asylum seekers from entering the US, a move that human rights advocates said undermined international asylum laws.

The latest attempt to restrict access will cause immediate obstacles for those who have lawfully abided by an already challenging process, according to immigration law experts.

Many applicants are likely to have "spent thousands of dollars and disrupted their lives to attend scheduled interviews, only to have their appointments cancelled at the last minute", Brian Simmons, an attorney at immigration law firm Fragomen in Washington told the Financial Times.

It is unclear when those appointments will be rescheduled.

On the frontline

Gaza farmers risk death just to feed their communities

Source: Forensic Architecture. Note: map shows areas of 'flora' as a proxy for cultivable land

Seham Tantesh *Gaza*
Tamara Davison *Beirut*
Julian Borger

With Gaza's population of 2.1 million hemmed into an ever smaller slice of the territory, farmers are using every last remaining patch of unspoilt earth, however tiny, in their struggle to survive.

Amid severe shortages of water, fertiliser and pesticide, and with more than 80% of greenhouses ruined, it has taken inventiveness and determination to clear land of debris and coax new seedlings into life. Venturing out into the open to tend to plants can also be deadly.

Saqer Abu Rabee's eldest son and brother were killed while at work growing food for their communities on their small plots in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza. His son Yousef, 24, was killed by a drone-fired missile in October 2024. Abu Rabee was working in the fields just feet from his son when it happened.

"The missile was aimed directly at him and I have no doubt that he was the intended target," Abu Rabee said. Yousef was the driving force behind a collective called We'll Plant It, since renamed Our Land, which brought together volunteers and encouraged farmers to go back to the land.

"They decided to target him directly," said Abu Rabee, who stressed his son had no political affiliations. "Before his death, we received daily threats from the Israeli army. They shelled our area every day three or four times while I was working alongside the labourers."

Abu Rabee's brother Bilal was killed on 2 July after going to retrieve agricultural supplies from a destroyed building. His death came nine months into a partial ceasefire during which Israeli forces have killed more than 1,200 Palestinians. Abu Rabee is convinced farmers have become prime targets because of their role in sustaining Palestinian communities among Gaza's ruins.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) deny targeting farmers or civilians, saying they have responded only to imminent threats from Hamas since the October ceasefire.

Despite the risks, Abu Rabee, 48, is still at work every day cultivating a 1.4-hectare (3.4-acre) plot in Beit Lahiya that was an orange orchard before the war. He said the trees had been bulldozed by the Israeli army.

▲ *Saqer Abu Rabee harvests aubergines with his family, which they will sell to wholesale traders. Left, he checks crops being grown for their seeds on his plot in Beit Lahiya, which had been an orange grove before the war*
PHOTOGRAPHS: AMJED TANTESH/ THE GUARDIAN

> ***'Fertile land that farmers had worked tirelessly to cultivate was seized just as it was ready for harvest'***
>
> **Saqer Abu Rabee**
> *Gaza farmer*

"We cleared it and rehabilitated it using only basic tools, manual labour and tremendous human effort. It took a great deal of time and hard work before it was ready for cultivation again," he said.

Out of that scrap of land, Abu Rabee says his family have produced hundreds of thousands of aubergine, tomato and pepper seedlings. They raise cash by growing their own aubergines to sell to wholesale traders, while most of the seedlings are distributed to other farmers or to families to plant in patches of earth around their homes and tents.

He says the supply has transformed the local food market. Aubergines now cost less than two shekels a kilogram compared with 40 shekels a few months ago. Peppers and molokhia, a green leafy vegetable, are a tenth of their market price earlier this year.

"What has happened is that Beit Lahiya has regained a degree of self-sufficiency," Abu Rabee said. "In my view, without Beit Lahiya, Gaza would face famine," he added. "Before the war, it was considered the food basket of Gaza because of its fertile soil, groundwater and light, productive land."

Increased aid and commercial deliveries under the ceasefire have brought Gaza back from the abyss of last year's famine conditions, but according to UN agencies there are still 1.4 million people - 67% of Gaza's population - facing crisis levels of food insecurity or worse.

Much of the commercial inflows of food are of poor nutritional quality. The director general of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, Qu Dongyu, has said the recovery will remain fragile without domestic food production.

"Food security in Gaza cannot recover unless local food production starts again and farmers, herders, fishers and other producers can rebuild their livelihoods," Qu said last month.

Based on satellite data, the UN agency estimates little more than a quarter of Gaza's total prewar cropland, 4,100 hectares, remains accessible, and only about 3% is undamaged, free of debris and ready for immediate cultivation.

Most of Gaza's prewar farmland is under Israeli military occupation, and the proportion has grown as the IDF has pushed the "yellow line" steadily forward over the course of the ceasefire.

Using specialised satellite imagery, the human rights advocacy group Forensic Architecture carried out a survey of flora across Gaza as a proxy for cultivable land. It found nearly 68% of the territory's flora was on the Israeli side of the yellow line and another 5% was inside a buffer zone declared by the IDF, delineated on maps with an orange line, where it is extremely dangerous for Palestinians to venture.

Abu Rabee's brother was shot with another man when they came within range of Israeli sniper positions. Their bodies lay in the open for two days because it was too dangerous for their relatives to retrieve them.

The family's old farm is now under Israeli control, so after the ceasefire was declared they came to Beit Lahiya to try to start again from scratch on leased land. Since October, the IDF has pushed the yellow line forward, swallowing up nearby farms in west Beit Lahiya.

"The expansion has had a devastating impact on the agricultural sector," Abu Rabee said. "Fertile land that farmers had worked tirelessly to cultivate after spending everything they had, or even borrowing money, was seized just as it was ready for harvest, leaving them with nothing."

On the remaining land, the challenges appear endless. With hardly any livestock left, there is little dung-based fertiliser, so the family improvise by piling decaying vegetation under tarpaulins.

They are also battling nematodes and other soil infestations and a chronic lack of water, all the time under the constant, unpredictable threat of death.

Abu Rabee said: "Stray bullets frequently reach this area and strike many places around us. Many people have also been wounded in the streets as a result of indiscriminate attacks.

"I fear for my own life simply because I'm a farmer."

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10878.12	5866.59	53417.56	66262.16	-0.0014	-0.0045

SOURCE: ICE www.ice.com/data

Business

Small power plants still at high risk of cyber-attack, say experts

Jillian Ambrose

Hundreds of Britain's smallest power plants could remain at a higher risk of state-sponsored cyber-attacks even after a successful Iran-linked hack last month, it has emerged.

Officials this week briefed energy bosses on the breach, which is understood to have shut an unnamed small gas power plant for four days.

However, the government's plan to toughen baseline cybersecurity standards for Britain's smallest power generators will not be required until the end of 2030, raising concerns over "an unacceptable gamble with our national security".

Official government documents, published this month, call for the industry regulator, Ofgem, to lay out proposals for new baseline cyber resilience requirements for gas and electricity infrastructure by the end of 2027, ahead of implementing new standards by the end of 2030. The Guardian understands that the hack has not altered this timeline.

Reports of the unprecedented cyber-attack emerged as the Cabinet Office prepares to urge UK citizens to stock up on tinned food and bottled water to prepare for extreme weather events and potential attacks from hostile states.

Calum Miller, the Liberal Democrats' foreign affairs spokesperson, said: "Leaving hundreds of small power generators exposed to cyber threats until the 2030s is simply an unacceptable gamble with our national security."

Britain has hundreds of small, unmanned gas plants connected to local power grids. They are typically idle for most of the year but can be used to ramp up generation.

Although the outage had no impact on the electricity system, the attack has raised concerns over vulnerabilities within locally connected power infrastructure, which is not required to meet the same security standards as large scale power plants.

> *'It's an unacceptable gamble with our national security'*
>
> **Calum Miller MP**
> *Spokesperson, Lib Dems*

"The government should not have to wait for the lights to go out before taking the security of our energy infrastructure seriously," Miller said. "They must immediately fast-track these regulations, not leave them until the 2030s. We mustn't leave an open goal to hostile states at a time of heightened global threats."

The government opened a consultation into the cyber resilience of power generators in March, after it introduced the cyber security and resilience bill to parliament last year.

The energy minister, Michael Shanks, said in the consultation that the UK "needs to keep pace with the current threat landscape".

Addressing the recent attack, Rafael Narezzi, the chief executive of energy cybersecurity specialist Centrii, said: "We should use it as a warning rather than wait for an incident that does [have consequences].

"Across the UK energy system we have small, medium and large generation assets, increasingly connected through digital systems, remote access, third parties and operational technology. This particular incident may not have had consequences for the wider grid, but the next one could be different."

Narezzi added: "What concerns me about this incident is not necessarily the size of the power generator that was affected, but how many others may be out there. Attackers do not necessarily select their targets according to how many megawatts they generate. They look for vulnerabilities, trusted access and opportunities.

"The UK has thousands of distributed assets increasingly contributing to how our energy system operates. Individually, many may appear insignificant. Collectively, their resilience matters enormously."

The government and Ofgem have been contacted for comment.

▲ *McFadden and local MP Juliet Campbell meet a recent Boots hire*

Labour: work is 'part of answer' to youth mental health crisis

Heather Stewart
Economics editor

Work is "part of the answer" to the mental health crisis among young people, Pat McFadden said yesterday as he met beneficiaries of Labour's youth jobs guarantee scheme.

The work and pensions secretary was speaking during a visit to the headquarters of Boots in Nottingham, where several 18- to 21-year-olds were taken on under the scheme, through which their wages are paid by the taxpayer for six months. Some of the recruits were packing and labelling online orders, while others have administrative roles. They told McFadden about long periods of fruitless jobhunting.

"It was just amazing for me to hear their stories," he said. "These are young people who have been out of work for one, two, up to four years. Most of them have been working here for a few weeks. And you can already see how it's changed their confidence in themselves."

A rise in cases of mental health conditions is widely cited as one cause for the increase in the number of young people not in education, employment or training (Neets) in recent years. But McFadden said the reasons could run the other way too. "Work is part of the answer. Work is good for you. It's bad for your mental health to be sitting at home, isolated.

"I see this not only as an economic thing, but as a response to greater instances of mental health problems for young people. The last thing we want to see is a diagnosis of problems leading to a life on benefits."

At a roundtable discussion, McFadden asked the young people how they felt as a result of their recent move into paid work. They cited better social lives and clearer daily routines.

The number of Neets in the UK recently topped 1 million - with the latest data due to be released today.

Asked whether it was a good use of public money to be subsidising corporations, he said: "I'm enthused when businesses like Boots ... step up and say: 'I want to play my part here.' And if there's a bit of a financial incentive in it, that's fine."

London rollout of robotaxis delayed 'for some time'

Mark Sweney

The rollout of robotaxis on the streets of London is unlikely to happen this year, as regulatory and technical hurdles push back the ambitious schedule set out by the UK government.

Only weeks ago Uber and London-based Wayve were granted the first minicab licences in the capital to allow them to offer self-driving taxi rides to paying customers - but with a human safety driver in place, for now - and said they would start trips "later this summer" before a full public launch.

In 2025, Heidi Alexander, the transport secretary, accelerated the proposed timeline for commercial trials of fully driverless taxi services by a year, announcing that they would start in the spring of this year.

However, progress has slowed in recent months and Transport for London (TfL) has still not published the guidance that companies wanting to offer services must follow to win its approval.

Last month, Christina Calderato, TfL's director of strategy, told the London assembly's transport committee the transit authority would not be in a position to start accepting applications "for some time".

She said: "I do not think we are in a rush to get [the guidelines] out. There is a huge amount of work going on behind the scenes."

Uber and Wayve have said that more than 100,000 Londoners are on their waiting list for self-driving taxis.

They are racing against Google-owned Waymo and its Chinese equivalent, Baidu's Apollo Go, to launch self-driving taxi services in London. Robotaxis are now available to hire in more than 20 cities across the US, China and the Middle East.

This month Zagreb in Croatia became the first European city to offer autonomous rides to the public, through Uber, but the service still has human "onboard monitoring".

On Tuesday, Waymo announced it planned to launch commercial operations in Munich, Germany, next year.

Ben Loewenstein, Waymo's head of policy and government affairs for the UK and Europe, told the Financial Times that the company was currently "working through the safety approval process" with the transport department and was waiting on TfL's guidance to gain consent.

He added that Waymo was working towards launching a fully autonomous service "by the end of this year" but would not say whether the company would be able to offer paid rides in that timeframe.

TfL was contacted for comment.

▲ *A Wayve car in London. It and Uber are licensed for autonomous rides with a human driver onboard*
PHOTOGRAPH: TIM ANDREW/WAYVE

Hospitality sector reports 'Burnham bounce' after cut in rates

Rob Davies

Pubs, bars and hotels have reported a "Burnham bounce" in optimism after the prime minister's overtures to the sector but said the goodwill could evaporate without further tax relief.

Andy Burnham positioned himself as a staunch ally of the hospitality industry before and after his arrival at No 10, announcing a discount last month on business rates for pubs, clubs and live music venues.

The result, according to a survey by multiple trade bodies, is that 37% of businesses in the sector feel optimistic his government will benefit hospitality and brewing, which are worth about £100bn to the economy.

The rate of optimism is double the 18% recorded before the cut was announced, an increase the trade bodies called a "Burnham bounce".

The government has signalled further changes to business rates to ease pressure on the sector. But with the details the measures still uncertain, some venue owners have said the steps taken so far have done little to reduce their rising costs.

The survey findings also show the industry believes the tax burden - particularly VAT - is continuing to hold back the sector. Three-quarters of respondents pointed to tax as the biggest barrier for businesses, with political instability (37%) cited as the second. The survey was compiled by the British Beer & Pubs Association, UK Hospitality, the British Institute of Innkeeping and Hospitality Ulster.

37%

Proportion of bars, pubs and hotels who expressed optimism that new policies would help their industry

"The new prime minister's action to back hospitality has clearly driven a boost in the sector's optimism, yet significant challenges remain," they said. "The support for pubs and live music venues on business rates was a great first step, and now we need to see wider support and conditions to allow the entire hospitality sector to grow and create jobs."

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Business view
Nils Pratley

Shein will list in Hong Kong with a shrunken price tag. London has dodged a bullet on this one

In a parallel world, we might now be preparing for the arrival on the London stock market of Shein, the giant Chinese-founded fast-fashion retailer. Or it could have happened already.

The possibility of a London flotation was a running story during 2024 and into last year as politicians from both main parties engaged in behind-the-scenes wooing. Shein was seen as a shot of tech adrenaline for a listless local listings scene, and an opportunity to advertise the UK's openness to international capital. Instead, Shein will float next week in Hong Kong. To which one can only say: thank goodness for that.

In a listings context, Shein was a cast-off. The company had rejected New York amid tensions between Washington and Beijing and hostile questions from US lawmakers over labour practices in its supply chains in China. London was merely a next-best option for a company whose owners seemed suspiciously anxious to find a stock market home in the west.

London did its reputation no favours with its willingness to jump. The Financial Conduct Authority, in charge of listings, took the view that it was "not unusual" for UK-listed companies to carry legal risks around the world and what mattered was disclosure to allow investors to form their own view. The Labour government sounded keen. Donald Tang, the famous banker hired as Shein's chair, did a round of feelgood meetings.

Shein was a cast-off. The company had rejected New York amid tensions between Washington and Beijing

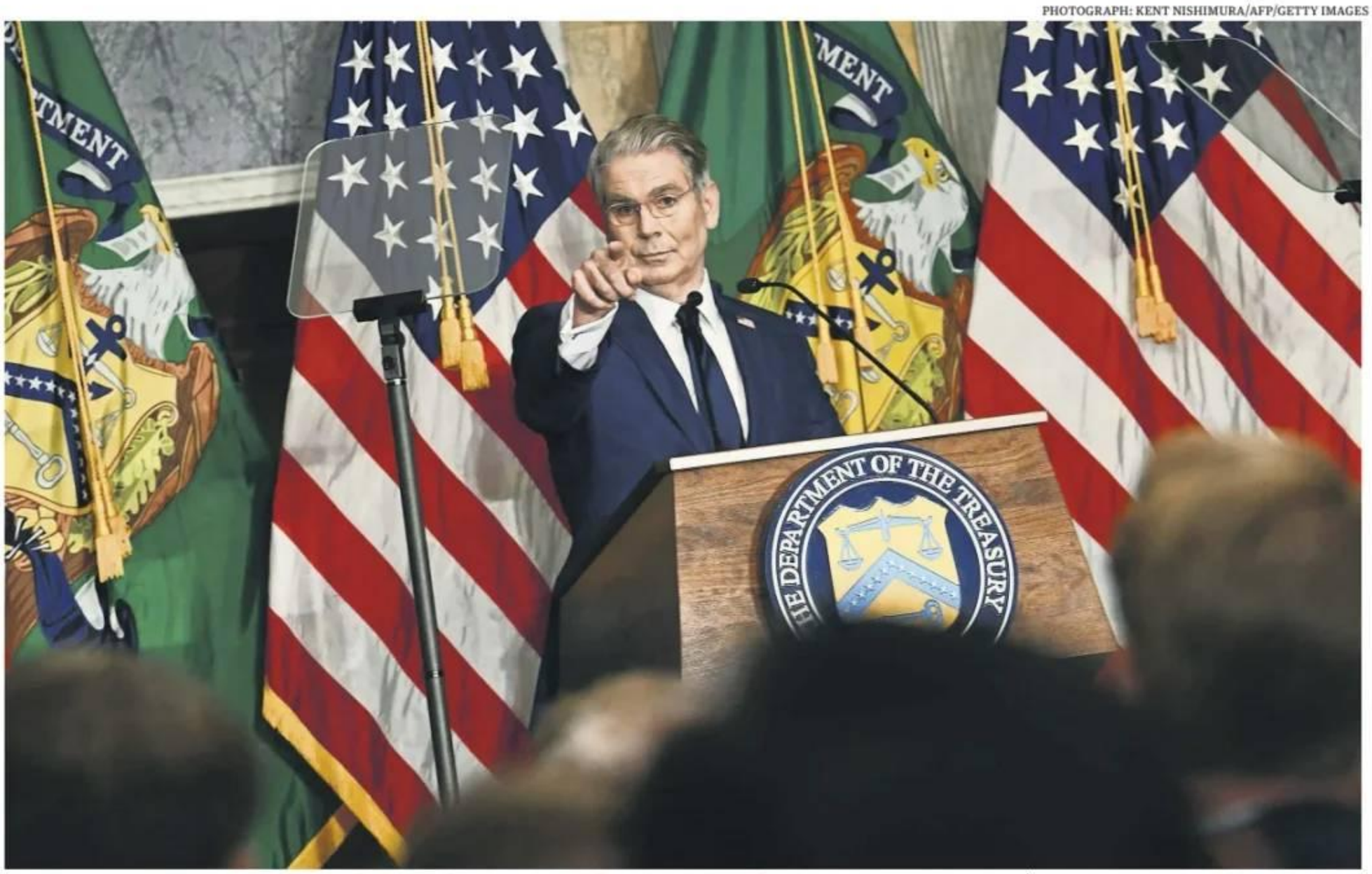
This positivity was punctured, however, in January last year when Shein's general counsel in Europe appeared at the Commons business select committee and stonewalled.

Did Shein source cotton from China, asked the committee chair, Liam Byrne. The company representative was not qualified to reveal such "detailed operational information". Byrne had not even been asking at that point about allegations of use of cotton produced in the Xinjiang region, which has been linked to Uyghur forced labour. The company, it should be added, had already said it had signed statements of compliance to modern slavery acts in the US, UK and elsewhere. But Byrne's view was entirely fair: "The reluctance to answer basic questions has frankly bordered on contempt of the committee."

The idea of listing in London soon went away - encouraged, it seemed, by pressure from Beijing. And so, Hong Kong it is. Note, though, how the company's price tag has shrunk from the £50bn that was talked about during the London leg of the global tour. The valuation will be $27bn (£20bn).

That figure also reflects the other issue that has dogged Shein: - political and societal resistance to the practice of shipping goods in small packages out of China to take advantage of tax breaks on low-value imported goods. The US has already closed such "de minimis" exceptions; the EU says it will phase them out; the UK intends to get there by 2029. Shein used to argue its business model didn't depend on tax breaks, but the lower valuation suggests investors don't see the issue as irrelevant.

In a world in which Shein had somehow managed to list in London last year, the valuation drop would have been felt here. The supposedly hot prize would look substantially less so. London dodged a bullet on this one.



▼ *The Treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, has previously dismissed concerns about the level of US debt*

PHOTOGRAPH: KENT NISHIMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Bessent v the bond market

Is Trump's Treasury panicking?

Kenneth Rogoff

Are we seeing the first signs of panic in Donald Trump's Treasury? The US is by far the world's biggest debtor, and the steady rise in global long-term interest rates – which I have long argued was inevitable – is starting to cause real pain.

Until now, the Treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, has dismissed concerns about US debt, which recently surpassed $40tn (£29tn), as a big nothingburger. Growth, in his telling, will be so spectacular the US will easily be able to meet its interest obligations, while the rest of the world will happily keep feeding it money. But if he believes that, why is he trying to strong-arm the bond market by fiddling with the maturity structure of government debt?

The obvious first move, and the one the markets are looking for, is to address the underlying problem by reining in America's huge federal deficit, which is running at roughly 6% of GDP. Bessent has repeatedly assured markets that the Trump administration's voracious borrowing is temporary, and that AI-led growth will generate an abundance of tax revenues that will soon bring the deficit down to a more manageable 3% of GDP.

That could happen, but there are many reasons to think that pain-free budget consolidation is wishful thinking, not least because AI profits are likely to prove much harder to tax than labour income. In the near term, the costs of supporting an ageing population, paying for what appears to be an inevitable surge in military spending and caving to intense populist pressure for more public spending will probably rise at least as fast as revenues.

Making matters worse, the premium on long-term US treasuries – part of the dollar's privilege as the global reserve currency – has largely evaporated. US debt no longer trades as a special safe asset relative to that of other advanced economies. The value of dollar dominance is thus fading even under the best of circumstances. And if budget pressures trigger a crisis, the result could be a rapid loss of the dollar's global market share that might otherwise take decades.

What, then, should the US Treasury do? The textbook answer is to take steps toward major budget consolidation, and not the heavy-handed cuts that Elon Musk and his Doge acolytes pursued in 2025. Bessent's problem is that his boss, Trump, understands American taxpayers are not prepared for genuine austerity.

That is why Bessent's turn toward bond buyback gimmicks is worrying. In effect, he is promising to take long-term debt out of the system and replace it with short-term debt, much as the Federal Reserve does when it engages in quantitative easing.

Such an approach can make sense in a panic, when there is a good chance long-term rates will come back down, but there is little evidence that the market is the one panicking right now. In fact, global long-term real interest rates are rising everywhere, suggesting US exceptionalism no longer applies, at least not to the same degree.

Bessent has argued for some time that long-term rates are too high, favouring short-term borrowing as a way to wait out the spike he believes will soon subside. He may be right. Plenty of prominent economists still cling to the view that today's elevated rates are an aberration. Unfortunately, studies suggest the recent increase is better thought of as a normalisation and that over the long term rates are more likely to rise than to fall.

Taken with the growing fiscal deficit, higher long-term interest rates and mounting spending pressures, America's $40tn debt burden is a very real concern.

More troubling still, Bessent's ham-fisted attempt to control the bond market undermines his hard-earned credibility as the safest pair of hands on the economic team. Until now, Bessent has managed to steer Trump away from some – albeit not all – of his most damaging impulses, whether on tariffs or the appointment of the Federal Reserve chair. Of course, he has to toe the line on issues dear to Trump's heart, insisting the US has in effect defeated Iran and that nothing will benefit working Americans more than upending the international trade order. But bond markets are not so easily pushed around.

Bessent, a former bond trader and hedge fund manager, scored a major win when he supported the Argentinian peso last autumn, and he probably did not do too much damage by backing the Japanese yen over the summer, even if the effects faded. In contrast, his attempt at Treasury-led quantitative easing has done little to stem the rise in long-term yields.

Given that there is not going to be any meaningful debt reduction before November's midterm elections, bond markets have good reason to remain deeply sceptical of America's fiscal trajectory.

$40tn

The current level of US national debt, which is increasingly a concern as interest rates continue to rise

6%

The proportion of America's GDP equivalent to the current level of the federal deficit

Kenneth Rogoff is a professor of economics at Harvard

'They're my ideas' Billionaire used AI to write critical piece

Uwa Ede-Osifo

Stanley Druckenmiller, a billionaire investor, said he used artificial intelligence to write his viral Wall Street Journal op-ed in which he sharply criticised the interference of Scott Bessent, the US Treasury secretary, in the US bond market.

▲ *Stanley Druckenmiller said he was 'proud' of using AI to write an article*

Many news outlets, including the Guardian, covered the editorial, highlighting Druckenmiller's rebuke of his former mentee, Bessent.

After the story went online, some readers said the text looked AI-generated. On Tuesday, Druckenmiller admitted it. "I'm not embarrassed by it," he told Notus.

The Wall Street Journal's editorial page editor, Paul Gigot, defended Druckenmiller in a statement. He said: "The question for us is whether what we publish from contributors reflects an author's original argument, and if the author has the standing and credibility to make it. In Stan Druckenmiller's case, we have had a relationship with him for many years, and nobody can doubt that his op-ed is his genuine opinion." Gigot also called AI "a fact of modern life".

Druckenmiller defended the choice in an interview with the Wall Street Journal. "At 73 I'm kind of proud of using it," he said. "These are my ideas and I've been speaking about them for over 15 years, as anyone who knows me knows. Would I prefer that I was a great writer? Yes, but that's not who I am."

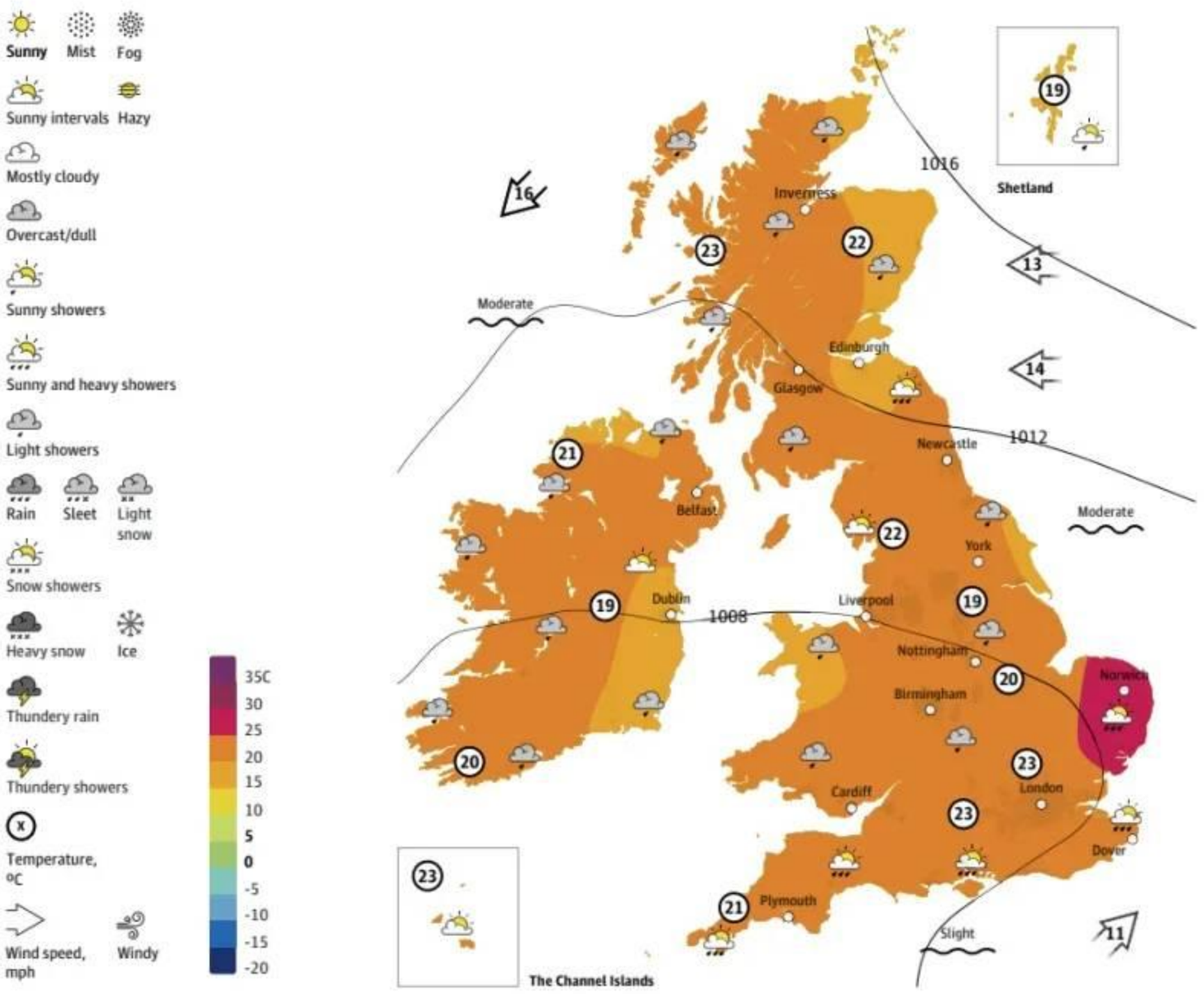
Druckenmiller, in his op-ed, opposed the US Treasury's doubling of the size of its government debt buybacks.

The media industry continues to grapple with its parameters around AI use. A UC Berkeley maths professor was criticised this month for using AI to edit an op-ed in the San Francisco Standard. Zvezdelina Stankova maintained the piece, which argued that test-blind college admissions had resulted in underprepared students, was the result of "intensive human work". The newspaper said, to its understanding, the piece reflected the "original analysis" of Stankova and her colleagues.

In March, the New York Times cut ties with a freelance journalist whose use of AI had resulted in plagiarism from a Guardian book review. The paper said it was a violation of its standards.

Weather
Thursday 27 August 2026

UK and Ireland Noon today



Forecast

Low 15 High 20
Tomorrow

Low 14 High 19
Saturday

Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

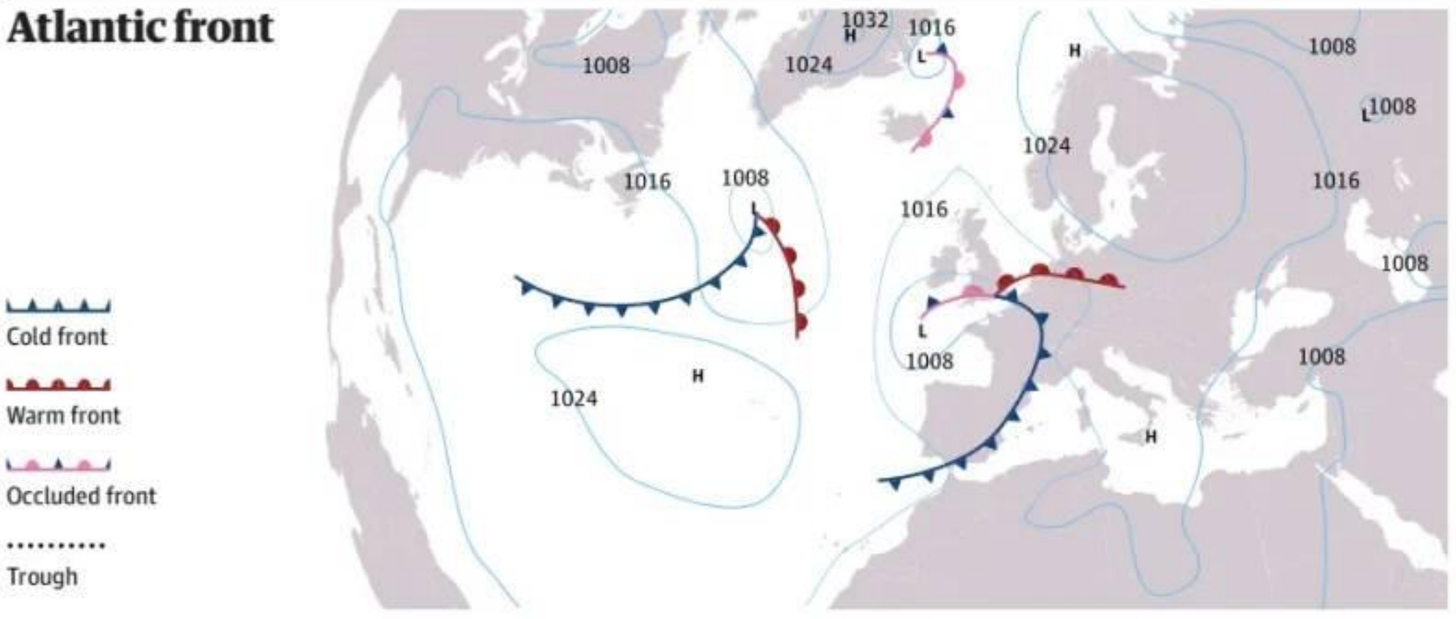
Latest	
25 Aug 2026	427.03
Weekly average	
16 Aug 2026	426.98
26 Aug 2025	425.60
26 Aug 2016	402.11
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	15 23	90%	Low
Manchester	15 21	90%	Low
Edinburgh	14 19	55%	Low
Belfast	14 22	55%	Low
Birmingham	14 21	95%	Low
Brighton	15 21	90%	Low
Bristol	15 22	85%	Low
Cardiff	16 21	85%	Low
Newcastle	15 20	85%	Low
Penzance	16 21	85%	Low

Atlantic front



Weatherwatch

Tarmac softens in the summer heat, which may cause problems on the roads, but even trains running on steel rails are not immune.

Railways in the UK are generally designed to operate within a 45C temperature range. The rails expand slightly in the heat and excessive temperatures can produce "sun kink", with rails warping into S-shapes. The effect is small but the distortion can derail fast trains, so speeds are reduced for safety.

Thermal expansion also causes overhead power lines to droop, and in extreme conditions they may contact trees or other obstacles. This can be solved with auto-tensioning, balancing weights or springs that adjust to changing conditions, but not all power lines have been updated.

Signalling equipment in metal cabinets is also vulnerable. The inside of these cabinets can reach 70C (158F) during a heatwave, causing electronics to fail.

None of these problems are entirely new but they are now more common. Hopefully, hotter summers should drive investment in mitigation measures so that delays due to excessive heat become less rather than more frequent. **David Hambling**

Around the world

Algiers	35	Lisbon	22
Ams'dam	27	Madrid	23
Athens	35	Malaga	32
Auckland	17	Melb'rne	16
B Aires	17	Mexico C	24
Bangkok	33	Miami	33
Barcelona	30	Milan	32
Basra	48	Mombasa	30
Beijing	29	Moscow	18
Berlin	26	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	31	N Orleans	28
Brussels	28	Nairobi	26
Budapest	30	New Delhi	35
C'hagen	21	New York	27
Cairo	37	Oslo	25
Cape Town	24	Paris	26
Chicago	27	Perth	16
Corfu	37	Prague	27
Dakar	32	Reykjavik	11
Dhaka	33	Rio de J	24
Dublin	19	Rome	33
Florence	36	Shanghai	32
Gibraltar	27	Singapore	32
H Kong	31	Stockh'm	21
Harare	25	Strasb'g	32
Helsinki	21	Sydney	17
Istanbul	30	Tel Aviv	33
Jo'burg	20	Tenerife	29
K Lumpur	32	Tokyo	30
K'mandu	28	Toronto	26
Kabul	32	Vancouv'r	21
Kingston	33	Vienna	30
Kolkata	32	Warsaw	24
L Angeles	35	Wash'ton	30
Lagos	28	Well'ton	13
Lima	24	Zurich	30

High tides

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Aberdeen	0038	4.0m	1311	3.9m	**London Bridge**	0114	6.6m	1332	6.6m
Avonmouth	0636	11.9m	1855	12.5m	**Lossiemouth**	1140	3.7m	2339	4.0m
Barrow	1103	8.3m	2313	8.9m	**Milford Haven**	0543	6.4m	1758	6.8m
Belfast	1047	3.1m	2254	3.4m	**Newquay**	0435	6.2m	1649	6.7m
Cobh	0453	3.7m	1712	3.9m	**North Shields**	0245	4.8m	1516	4.7m
Cromer	0552	4.8m	1828	4.6m	**Oban**	0523	3.6m	1741	3.9m
Dover	1036	6.3m	2252	6.3m	**Penzance**	0409	5.0m	1623	5.3m
Dublin	1114	3.7m	2310	4.0m	**Plymouth**	0509	4.9m	1722	5.2m
Galway	0450	4.6m	1657	4.9m	**Portsmouth**	1108	4.5m	2312	4.4m
Greenock	--	--	1205	3.0m	**Southport**	1013	8.3m	2221	8.8m
Harwich	1119	3.8m	2346	3.8m	**Stornoway**	0632	4.3m	1833	4.7m
Holyhead	1000	5.1m	2204	5.5m	**Portland**	0618	1.8m	1832	2.0m
Hull	0531	7.0m	1809	6.9m	**Whitby**	0319	5.2m	1548	5.2m
Leith	0158	5.2m	1425	5.2m	**Wick**	1103	3.1m	2302	3.4m
Liverpool	1045	8.6m	2253	9.1m	**Workington**	1108	7.5m	2318	8.0m

Sun & Moon

Sun rises	0604
Sun sets	1957
Moon rises	1943
Moon sets	0458
Full Moon	28 Aug

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2026

Lighting up

Belfast	2029 to 0624
Birm'ham	2006 to 0611
Brighton	1957 to 0608
Bristol	2008 to 0617
Carlisle	2016 to 0610
Cork	2032 to 0639
Dublin	2027 to 0627
Glasgow	2025 to 0614
Harlech	2017 to 0620
Inverness	2028 to 0609
London	1957 to 0606
M'chester	2010 to 0612
Newcastle	2012 to 0605
Norwich	1955 to 0559
Penzance	2017 to 0631

Sport

Boxing

Just how good is Moses Itauma? The expert view

Page 36 →

Cycling

Briton Brennan blasts to Vuelta stage-five victory

Page 37 →

◀ *Linda Noskova is still adjusting to her new life as a Wimbledon champion*
KIRILL KUDRYAVTSEV/AFP/GETTY

Tennis

'You start all over' Noskova battles fame and desire after Wimbledon

The 21-year-old held her nerve at SW19 after squandering five championship points. **Tumaini Carayol** learns about the aftermath and the Czech's off-court passions

Linda Noskova has spent almost her entire life working towards mastering her sport. She began travelling around Czechia and then the world for tournaments before she was a teenager. Her life decisions have revolved around tennis for as long as she can remember.

Those early years prepared Noskova for the challenge of winning her first grand slam title, but the biggest lesson from her triumph at Wimbledon last month has been her lack of preparedness for everything that followed. The world did not come to a halt upon the completion of her ultimate goal. Life continues at the same pace, and now she must find her place in the sport once more.

"Once you feel like you have kind of achieved the dream that you have always been thinking about and dreaming about, it's very tough to switch and to act like it never happened basically and go for the same thing all over again," she says.

It has now been six weeks since Noskova won Wimbledon at 21 years old under remarkable circumstances against her elder compatriot Karolina Muchova. She had appeared to be blazing through to an easy victory in the final before she squandered five match points and found herself fighting for her life in a third set. Noskova's recovery to win the title was one of the most impressive mental performances in years. After her initial celebrations and the champions' dinner, she returned to Czechia for her homecoming. "You never know what really is waiting for you once you win a grand slam [title], your first one, so everything was new to me," she says. "I was not prepared for any of those things. So whatever came, that was a big surprise."

Noskova says the week at home was "crazy and chaos". Having spent her early years flying under the radar of fans and the media, her return generated intense attention as she tried to capitalise on her success. "It was a lot of [different] experiences. All the new people or all the new opportunities I had and all the new tasks I had to do so it was a busy week."

After "managing to steal a few days abroad" in Italy, it was already time to return to practice and look ahead. The tennis circuit moves at such a relentless pace and for every other player on tour Wimbledon had long been old news. Noskova returned to competition with a straight-sets defeat against the then world No 70 Caty McNally, in Toronto, but she fared better in Cincinnati winning two rounds before defeat by the world No 10, Amanda Anisimova, in the last 16. Her excellent performances in doubles, where the pressure is off and expectations are nonexistent, provided her with a reminder that she is still striking the ball sweetly. She won the women's doubles title in Cincinnati alongside her countrywoman Marie Bouzkova.

'You never know what really is waiting for you once you win your first grand slam title'

Many grand slam title winners say their first major triumph increased their desperation to win big championships rather than satisfying it. Noskova is still waiting with great anticipation for such feelings to surface. "I'm still kind of fighting through that. The motivation is not 100% as it was right before the tournament [Wimbledon]. But I know that it's hard. I know a lot of players that have dealt with the same issue. But it's tennis after all. You wake up from what happened and you start all over, so I'm just waiting for that."

Until then, she has plenty to ponder on a career that has taken her from Bystricka, a Czech village of 1,000 people, to the most prominent stages of women's sport. "Once I started to take tennis a bit more seriously, I wanted to have better players to play with, better coaches. I had to switch teams, so I did the same thing with school, so we moved to a different city [Prerov]. I could have been around 13, 14. So I guess that might have been the first moment when I was like: 'OK, I have to move because of tennis.'"

There were indications of Noskova's potential throughout her young career. Aged 14, her short hair draped over a Yonex visor, Noskova finished as a finalist at the prestigious Les Petites As under-14s event, losing against Alexandra Eala. Aged 16 she won the 2021 French Open girls' title, a significant achievement that allowed her to believe that she might one day win a real grand slam title. Noskova is a few months younger than the two-time grand slam title winner Coco Gauff, meaning she was far from the most prodigious youngster of her age group. Noskova has kept ahead of the rest of their contemporaries.

Beyond her on-court success, Noskova cuts a distinctive figure for the outside interests she enjoys in a sport where many have no interest in anything other than their careers. She spent some of her off-season last December volunteering at a school in Zanzibar, Tanzania. On her secondary Instagram page, Noskova describes herself as a "big, big environmentalist" with her interests ranging from LGBTQ and human rights to gender equality. She sees herself volunteering in other sectors, particularly to aid environmental causes, during and after her career. "I feel I have always been passionate about these kinds of things," she says.

"So that's why I would like to use tennis as a platform to get me into these places. But that still has a lot of time. I want to focus on my career first and then since this kind of comes natural to me it's not going to be as hard to [pursue]. I would love to do something with the environment, either with animals or nature after my career. That would be my main goal once I'm done with all of this, but for my career it's going to be another 10 years so I feel like I will do some of those things during the career."

For now the focus is on understanding how to handle her new reality as a grand slam title winner. There are worse positions to be in at 21.

◀ *Linda Noskova triumphed in the third set against her elder compatriot Karolina Muchova to secure her first grand slam title*
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

Sky extends US Open deal

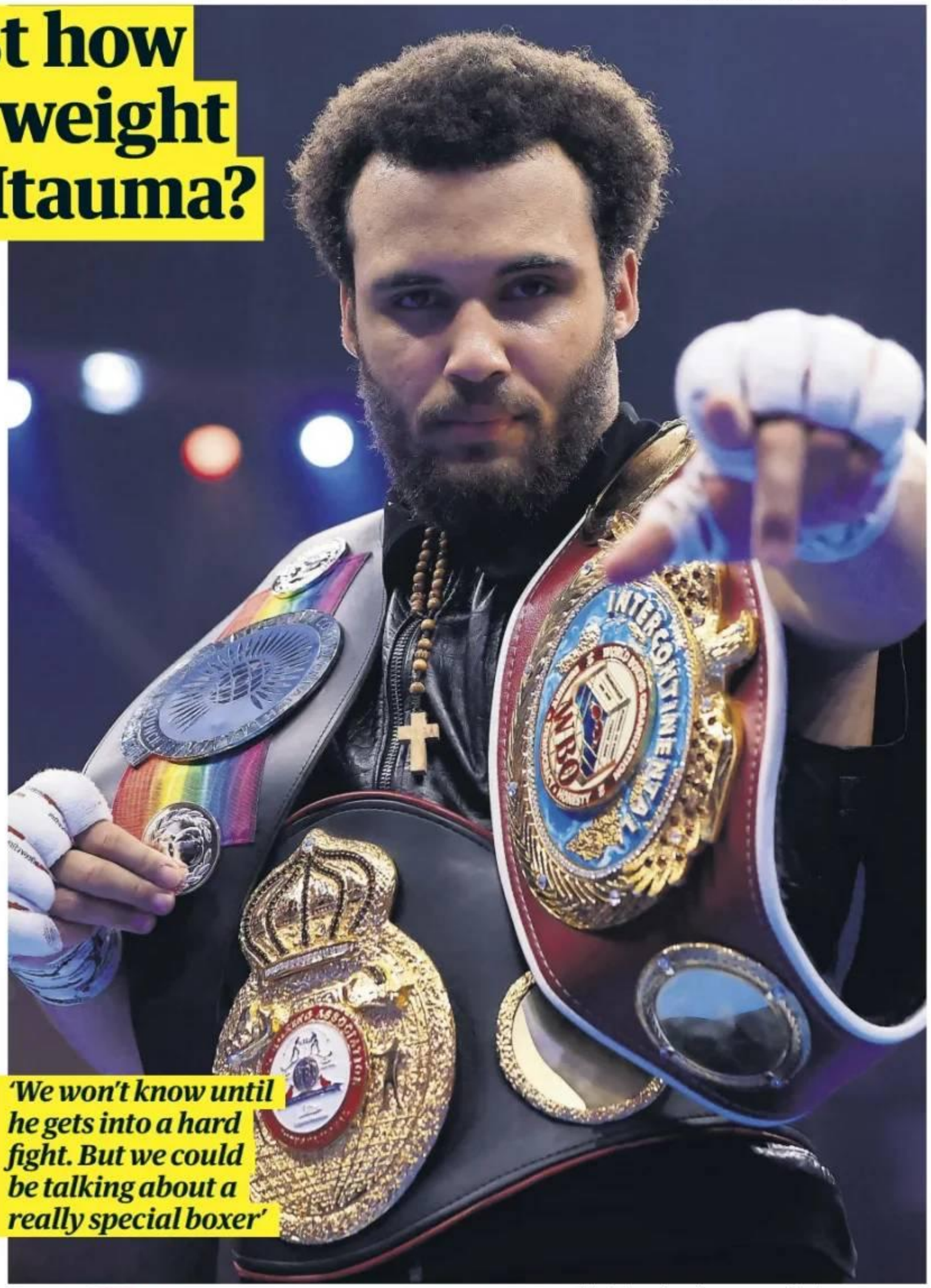
Sky Sports has agreed a new deal to extend its live television coverage of the US Open.

The three-year contract, which is expected to be announced when the singles tournament from Flushing Meadows begins on Sunday, will keep the US Open live on Sky until 2030. Under the terms of the new deal, Sky will broadcast more than 12 hours of live tennis each day across the extended three-week tournament.

Sky has had exclusive live UK rights to the US Open since 2023 when the broadcaster secured a five-year deal to replace the previous rights holder, Amazon Prime.

It was interest created by Emma Raducanu's stunning US Open victory in 2021 that played a big role in persuading Sky to bid for the rights, having walked away from tennis in 2017. But Raducanu has not featured much on Sky's coverage as she has struggled with form and fitness, and misses out this year with injury. Matt Hughes

Reality check: just how good is the heavyweight sensation Moses Itauma?



▼ *Moses Itauma after winning a bout against Demsey McKean in 2024*
REUTERS/ANDREW COULDRIDGE

Before the youngster bids to become world champion after just 15 fights, experts Barry Jones and Andy Lee tell **Donald McRae** why he warrants the excitement

On Saturday night the 21-year-old Moses Itauma expects to become the second-youngest world heavyweight champion in history, after Mike Tyson, when he fights Croatia's Filip Hrgovic for the IBF title at the O2 Arena in London. In an attempt to sift through the hype and to assess the potential Itauma has shown, the Guardian asked Barry Jones and Andy Lee for their expert views on the strengths and possible weaknesses of the young British fighter.

Itauma promises to become the dominant new force of the unpredictable heavyweight division but Hrgovic is his first real test as he strives to become a world champion in just his 15th fight.

Jones, a former WBO super-featherweight world champion, is now the leading pundit in British boxing. His trenchant insights are matched only by Lee, who won the WBO world middleweight title before becoming the best trainer in Britain and Ireland. They shared their considered views of the most exciting heavyweight fighter to have emerged in years.

Barry Jones

I'd heard lots of stories about Moses Itauma when he was sparring with really good fighters [as a 15-year-old]. The word was that heavyweights needed to avoid this teenager. But you know how people exaggerate, and we all get super-excited with the big guys.

But then I started watching him fight and his movement immediately set him apart. I didn't understand how he could think and move so quick. Most heavyweights are so focused on hitting the target because once they land they can hurt the opponent. But Itauma finds angles and moves off the punches. He's physically gifted but being able to use your brain is far more important.

I often say what you do after the punch is almost as important as the punch itself. Some fighters throw a good shot and they're guilty of admiring their work. Or they throw the punch and move too fast which means they're not getting any purchase on the shot. But Itauma punches with power and precision and he knows how and when to move. The only other heavyweight that does this today is Oleksandr Usyk and the reason is that he and Itauma have boxed at lighter weights. Most heavyweights were heavyweights as kids and they don't learn that skill set where you punch and move and learn the intricate parts. But Usyk and Itauma learned how to move their feet, how to punch with speed, and how to find the angle of attack. So Itauma's brain is geared like a middleweight, his speed is like a light-heavyweight and his power belongs to a heavyweight. That's an unbelievable combination.

People are calling him the best young heavyweight since Mike Tyson. I would say Tyson's skill set is massively underrated now because all we remember is him putting people to sleep. He was ferocious and brutal but his knockouts were built on a fantastic fast jab and he would bend his legs as he punched. Itauma does it differently because he positions himself just off the angle of the line. If we take the line being a massive hand right in front of you, he will move around that target whereas Tyson, being much shorter, came up from under the lead at terrific speed.

Itauma wants you to jab. He'll be patient and he'll wait and, once you throw it, he fends off and comes at you from different angles. He can come at you from either side, or from the inside, or over the top. Heavyweights are not used to turning and they're not used to thinking. The mental stress manifests itself physically very quickly with a big guy. When you have to turn and move, and your brain's constantly thinking, it's draining. It happens in all weights but the big men get knackered very quickly by someone who moves and makes them think. Itauma darts, feints and has fast hands. Like Usyk, he makes you miss and then he makes you pay.

You've interviewed him, so you know how difficult an interviewee he is, but also how thoughtful he is with his answers. He thinks about everything and he thinks before he speaks. And he thinks before he punches and moves. It's the sign of any good sportsman to think on your feet in a pressure situation. You can't teach that.

Hrgovic is a decent test but that's a lot to do with his heart rather than his skill set. Once Itauma gets into his rhythm, it's going to be hard to stop him. So that solid jab has to be a real weapon for Hrgovic and he has to really work at a quick pace, otherwise he's done. I'll tell you what Hrgovic does well. He chops down with the right hand. He then brings the elbow up and it gives a crane effect on the shot. It's a real sledgehammer. That's the shot, with the jab, I'm worried about for Itauma. But I think he'll make it easy and after he beats Hrgovic you can let him off the leash.

'We won't know until he gets into a hard fight. But we could be talking about a really special boxer'

▲ *'His brain is like a middleweight, his speed is like a light heavyweight'*
RICHARD PELHAM/GETTY IMAGES

The old guard of heavyweights are going and, in my opinion, the quicker they go the better. Let them do their own little world tour and good luck to them. But there's a new breed now of heavyweights. None of the others are stellar but Moses is the brightest light by a million miles.

People ask if there is a danger in overhyping him. No. Of course we can't know for sure but isn't that the good part? Getting really excited and believing in a young heavyweight? I would back Moses Itauma all the way to become a great fighter.

Andy Lee

The first time I saw Moses Itauma up close was when he came to Saudi Arabia to spar with my heavyweight Joseph Parker, who was preparing to fight [the giant Chinese heavyweight] Zhilei Zhang [in March 2024]. He was with us for two weeks and he was very impressive. The spars were actually harder than the fight - and Joseph was put down twice by Zhang [before winning a majority decision]. So that tells you how good Moses was as a young heavyweight. When he and Joe went sparring it was like a four-round war.

Moses has real speed, size, strength and good power. But as fast as he is with his hands and feet, he's sharper with his mind. I love the way he can assess his opponent and pick his shots really well. Joseph was the top heavyweight at the time and, like all young guys [Itauma was 19 then] coming in to spar, they try to impress and leave their mark. He certainly did that and we spent a lot of time together. He's a lovely guy.

It's a big call to compare him to Mike Tyson but he's got immense promise. But the heavyweight division is really unpredictable. You can't know for sure what's going to happen. It can go so well and then, all of a sudden, everything can change and turn bad.

In Hrgovic, he's got a world-rated heavyweight in front of him. Hrgovic has looked vulnerable so he could be the perfect opponent for Moses. But he could also be the right opponent to take him into deep waters and really test him. As a fighter, you don't really know how you're going to react until you're in those rounds 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Those are the rounds where you really find out what you're made of, and everybody else finds out what you're made of too. It's one thing to do it in sparring. But it's in the fight that it really counts.

Moses beat Jermaine Franklin is his last fight [on a fifth-round stoppage in March]. I thought it was a spectacular knockout. But just before the knockout, there were little signs of distress which you would expect to see from a young fighter. You've landed shots that usually knock out or stop your opponent but this guy is still not going down. So I think the knockout came at the perfect time for Moses.

There is no doubt the heavyweights are an ageing division. All the former champions and big names are well into their 30s now - and so it could open up for Moses to go on and dominate. You ask if he has any weaknesses and it's hard to see them. At the moment I don't see any.

But the questions he still has not answered are not technical, they're not on ability. They're not on speed or power. The questions which remain to be answered are internal. They're emotional and they're characteristics we'll never know until he gets into a hard fight. They need to be proven. We just don't know but he might have that as well and then, if he does, we'll be talking about a really special heavyweight.

Fury v Joshua will be resolved next week, claims Warren

Donald McRae

Frank Warren believes the tortuous negotiations surrounding the proposed fight between Anthony Joshua and Tyson Fury are subject to a time limit which will run out by the end of next week.

Conceding that he is unsure if the much-delayed bout will happen, Warren also said the decision now depends solely on Joshua and that Fury, whom he promotes, is already in training in the US and ready to fight an alternative opponent in November.

"Nothing's been signed off as yet," Warren said of a revised contract for Fury and Joshua to fight in New York. "Everybody's talking and talking rather than getting on with the business and getting it done. I think it will happen and if it doesn't, and there's a time limit on it, by the way, it will be one of those fights that slipped by.

"If it happens, it will be in November and, in all probability, in the States. Tyson went over the weekend to Miami, which is where he's training. So one way or another, he's going to fight in November. Hopefully, it's against AJ."

Asked about the time limit, with Joshua and his promoter Eddie Hearn wanting more money from the US promoters Zuffa Boxing now that the bout is being moved to the US, Warren said: "I should think they won't let it go past the end of next week."

Warren was then asked if he believed Joshua actually wanted the fight. "There're a lot of things I can't say at the moment. Do I think so? I don't know. He had a hard fight last time, didn't he? [Joshua was knocked down twice in the first round against the obscure Albanian Kristian Prenga last month] Came through at the end. But he did have a hard fight. Does he want it? He's the only one who knows that. He says he does."

The promoter added: "They signed for a contract for the fight to take place in the UK. Tyson also didn't sign up for America, but he's willing to fight there. He signed for that fight last January, and unfortunately, AJ's tragic [car] accident [in Nigeria] put it back. But I'm confident that Tyson will fight [in November]. He's in training. Eddie has come out and said what they want. I don't know what the monetary situation is but, whatever it is, everyone's got to make their mind up - otherwise move on."

▲ *Tyson Fury has started training in Miami but 'nothing's signed off yet'*

▼ *Matthew Brennan powers his way towards the finish line in Roquetes*
BRUNA CASAS/REUTERS

Cycling *Vuelta a España*

Brennan's devastating speed clinches second stage win

Luke McLaughlin

The British rider and Grand Tour debutant Matthew Brennan of Visma-Lease a Bike sprinted to a second stage victory of the Vuelta a España in Roquetes.

Wout van Aert and Christophe Laporte expertly led out their 21-year-old teammate at the end of stage five, and the youngster confidently demonstrated his devastating speed again to conclude the 173.4km route from Falset.

Brennan has two victories from two sprint opportunities at the final Grand Tour of the season. Jordi Meeus (Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe) was second and Vincenzo Albanese (EF Education-EasyPost) third on the day, while Tadej Pogacar (UAE Team Emirates XRG) safely maintained his commanding 3min 21sec general classification lead.

A five-rider breakaway escaped early: Walter Calzoni (Pinarello Q36.5), Stefan Küng (Tudor Pro Cycling), Mattia Gaffuri (Picnic PostNL) and Diego Uriarte (Equipo Kern Pharma) joined Fredrik Dversnes (Uno-X Mobility) after the Norwegian rider attacked solo.

Küng soon dropped back to the peloton, leaving a four-man breakaway, but they were caught by the chasing bunch with around 100km remaining. It was Lidl-Trek who upped the pace and shut the escapees down on a blowy day when crosswinds and potential splits in the bunch were a concern.

On the first day of this year's race staged entirely on Spanish roads, Ethan Hayter (Soudal Quick-Step) took maximum points at the intermediate sprint after 114.7km. Hayter, narrowly denied victory on stage one by Pogacar, had previously looked in danger of being dropped amid hectic racing in strong winds.

Mads Pedersen of Lidl-Trek - who would have expected to compete in the bunch sprint - was dropped on the category-three Puerto de Paüls climb, and the powerful Visma-Lease a Bike team dominated the final stages.

"It's better than a normal day job, it's fantastic," said Brennan. "Second one in the bag, first Grand Tour ... I'm just very thankful to finish it off again, and I think the boys are quite relieved.

"It was pretty spot on. We had the two boys pulling on the front until the final few kilometres. Then Wout and Chris are the best guys you can have in that situation ... glad we could finish with the arms in the air.

"On this type of terrain, it works really nicely ... these guys are just so strong ... it gives you the confidence to go on and achieve more."

Van Aert told TNT Sports: "When you have Matt in a group like that, it's the best card to play, and I don't even need to see the replay to see how he finished that one off."

Asked if it feels just as good to see Brennan win as when he wins a race himself, Van Aert smiled and said: "It comes close." Today's 177.5km stage six, from Alcossebre to Castelló, is a medium mountain stage with 3,080m of climbing.

Racing

Ken Oliver, former Guardian racing editor, dies aged 86

Tributes are paid to the much-loved and respected Fleet Street veteran who also tipped as 'Larry Lynx'

Greg Wood

Ken Oliver, who has died at the age of 86, was the Guardian's racing editor for many years until his retirement in 2004, at the end of a lifetime in racing journalism at publications including the London Evening News, the Sporting Life, the Sun, the London Daily News, the Sunday People - where he tipped as Larry Lynx - and as the editor of Ruff's Guide to the Turf, the racing equivalent of Wisden.

Ken was the racing editor when I joined the Guardian in 2001 and he was a joy to work with: an old-school veteran of the glory days of Fleet Street, blessed with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the sport and steeped in all the rhythms and traditions of daily papers that would soon be ushered into history by the internet. He was also unflappable, understanding when a story or plan went awry, and the best possible company for a pint or two once the first edition had been put to bed.

The long lunch was another Fleet Street tradition that Ken maintained diligently. "What a great operator he was," Chris Hawkins, a racing writer with the Guardian for nearly 30 years, says. "Nothing ever seemed to faze him. He also loved a pint, a game of snooker and was a great trencherman. I remember one Sunday, we were having the full works for lunch in the Albion. Ken was getting stuck into the roast beef when the landlady shouted out: "Ken, the Dovers are in." He said: "Right, when I finish this, I'll have one. And he did."

▲ *Ken Oliver was steeped in all the traditions of daily newspapers*

Like many Fleet Street journalists in the post-war era, Ken started out as a teaboy in his teens - in his case, on the London Evening News in an era when it was the biggest-selling evening paper in the world - and then worked his way through the ranks.

"He was the most affable, easy-going person you could ever, ever come across," Dennis Sherriffs, a former Guardian colleague, says. "Ken would never get up or down, it was always smooth as smooth, and then it was: 'Come on Den, let's go for a pint.' As a person, you would not have got a nicer guy."

In retirement, Oliver remained a regular racegoer at West Country tracks - Wincanton was his favourite - for many years, and he died a few months after celebrating the 60th anniversary of his wedding to Sylvia.

Tony Paley, Oliver's successor as the Guardian's racing editor, said: "I owe a lot to Ken and will always be eternally grateful for his faith in me when recommending my application to the sports editor for a place on the racing desk at the Guardian.

"Totally unflappable, Ken had the most amazing eye for a print edition and could redesign pages in the light of breaking stories faster than anyone I have ever seen. He was kind, had an engaging sense of humour and was always 'the life and soul'. I know he will be very sorely missed by his family, friends and all his ex-colleagues."

England drink in new temperance movement with Lord's prayer

Despite unwanted headlines leading up to the second Test, the home captain's focus is on dispatching Pakistan

Ali Martin
Lord's

Here we go again, then. It feels like every Test involving England these days is one of critical importance in some way or other. On one level, this is good for business, showing the depth of interest compared with other, ahem, products. But it is not necessarily a good thing for the team in this instance.

Since Ben Stokes retired and the last of Bazball's many funerals in June, the players left behind have been trying to wriggle free from their recent past. Problem is, they are finding certain aspects trickier to shake off than others. For the second time this summer, a thumping win to go 1-0 up has been doused instantly by a late night on the drink and the headlines inevitably generated. England are likely to go into this Lord's Test against Pakistan today unchanged, and so in that respect it beats the Rex Rooms fiasco and the semi-skimmed team that was then hammered at the Oval. The briefly handcuffed Brydon Carse, unused last week, was with his county when the latest self-own took place.

The footage of Carse outside Molly Malone's Irish Tavern came at the worst time for Root

And yet the footage of Carse outside Molly Malone's Irish Tavern still came at the worst possible time for Joe Root as, with his new head coach still to arrive, he tries to plot a fresh course.

Drink-related stories tend to trigger all manner of conversations about the sport's relationship with alcohol. And like any Lord's Test, the bingo card of opinions will again be ticked off to a soundtrack of popping corks and beer flowing freely from the taps.

But even with English cricket's temperance movement still a fringe one, the public do expect a certain level of professionalism: more professional, certainly, than Harry Brook being clocked by a bouncer the night before captaining his country. And maybe, in a busy home summer, not going *too* large after a solitary win.

With all due respect to Derbyshire, sixth in Division Two and last seen in the top flight 13 years ago, they are not - or at least shouldn't be - a 4am-departure-from-the-Irish-bar kind of victory if you are an international cricketer.

If Durham's players thought so, good luck to them in some ways. They will argue they had earned an extra day off. Notwithstanding the precise details of the incident being looked at by Derbyshire police and the Cricket Regulator, Carse's sporting mistake was not thinking like a player due to join up with a Test squad two days later. He was just one injury away from a recall.

Instead, like a fair few of England's on-field errors this past year, he has become content to be clipped up, shared widely and lampooned. The best way to change perceptions remains winning, with this week a golden chance for England to secure a first Test series victory since the tour of New Zealand 20 months ago.

When briefly discussing the actual cricket in his pre-match press conference, Root said he expected a response from Pakistan - given the calamity they endured at Headingley, the only way is up for the tourists. They also welcome back their captain, Babar Azam, who is "90% fit" after missing the opener with a hand injury.

Babar is not necessarily a magic bullet, however, nearly four years since his last Test century and with only one of his nine to date coming outside Asia. The 31-year-old at least looked relaxed during the training days, not weighed down by the growing despondency of their fans and talk of a historic low.

The challenge will be on and just outside off-stump when Ollie Robinson is chugging in from

▲ *Brydon Carse was dropped from the squad after being handcuffed*

Tongue reveals 'robust' talk from Root has reset standards for Test squad

Simon Burnton
Lord's

Joe Root's "robust conversation" with the England Test squad at Lord's this week has finally ended any uncertainty about the conduct expected of them. Josh Tongue has said the penny had "100%" dropped after the Test captain "made it clear what he expects from us" after 10 months of repeated infringements and frequent embarrassment.

"It was a chat that was needed, a very good chat from Rooty," the 28-year-old said. "He was very clear on the message of what it's like to be an England cricketer. We're very privileged to put on that England shirt and we want to show kids growing up how good it is to play for England in front of thousands of people.

"He was honest with us all in the changing room. He said it straight. What has happened in the past is the past, and we need to try to move on from that."

Last November, Tongue, who was training with England's white-ball squad in New Zealand before the Ashes, was with Harry Brook and Jacob Bethell at a Wellington nightclub when Brook was punched by a bouncer. The incident, on the night before a one-day international, led to Brook being fined and given a final warning over his conduct and Bethell being cautioned for breaching team rules. Tongue was not disciplined.

"We've just got to make sure we're as professional as we can be," he said. "Obviously things have happened, we need to try to move on and show all the youngsters growing up wanting to play for England that it's an amazing place to be. I've just tried to move on from that [Wellington] situation and focus on the cricket.

"It's an absolute privilege to play for England and especially walking out and thousands of people watching you."

Josh Tongue says Joe Root has left his players in no doubt about how they must behave

Tongue admitted the Wellington incident had forced him to reflect on his own standards, but said he had "tried to forget about that as much as I can and focus on the cricket here, now". Since then he has cemented his place in the Test side, broken into the T20 and ODI teams, and won the Hundred with Manchester Super Giants.

"It's been crazy," he said. "I've always wanted to play all three formats for England. I ticked off the Test stuff and started very well. Then making my debut this year in the T20s and the 50-overs, and it seems like yesterday I was here at Lord's winning the Hundred."

Tongue also revealed that Stephen Fleming, England's new red-ball coach who is due to report for duty after the Test series against Pakistan, is already in regular contact with the players. "He messaged me the day

◀ *Rob Key, Joe Root and the England selector Marcus North on their way to a net session at Lord's*
STU FORSTER/ GETTY IMAGES

▼ *Pakistan captain Babar Azam returns after missing the Headingley Test with a hand injury*

Nursery End, plus three slippery quicks asking other questions. But it was not just a batting malfunction that settled matters last week, with England's run-rate of 4.55 with the bat saying more about the freebies they were served.

Lord's is a place with some happy memories for Pakistan, at least, being the scene of their last win in England in 2018 and four times before that. Plenty will hinge on the surface at Lord's and in that respect Root and Babar are not the only men feeling the pinch. Karl McDermott, the MCC's head groundsman, saw his pitch for the quick-fire New Zealand Test in June labelled "unsatisfactory" by the match referee and handed a demerit point.

In 2022, when Virat Kohli had just nicked off at Lord's for 16 amid a three-year drought of international centuries that had tongues wagging, Babar posted a message of support on social media that read: "This too shall pass. Stay strong." Whichever way Kohli took it privately at the time - one can imagine a few different reactions - it is a phrase that both captains, Carse, and the ground staff would do well to keep telling themselves this week.

before the first Test, touching on the Hundred and congratulating me on that, and good luck for the first Test," he said.

"Then he messaged me after [Tongue took a five-fer] on the first day as well, which was very nice. Obviously he wants to have a look at everyone before coming in for the South Africa series. It's good to know that he's been watching."

Babar Azam, who is set to return for Pakistan after missing the opening game with a finger injury, said his side's senior players have to impose themselves if they are to end a run of five defeats in their past six Tests. "It's not a burden, I think it's your responsibility as a senior player," he said.

"Last week we were not playing up to the mark, but after that we sat together, discussed our mistakes and then we just forgot those things and looked forward to this match."

Second Test

England
Probable
Emilio Gay, Ben Duckett, Jordan Cox, Joe Root (c), Harry Brook, Dan Lawrence, Jamie Smith (wk), Gus Atkinson, Jofra Archer, Ollie Robinson, Josh Tongue
Umpires Allahudien Paleker (SA), Paul Reiffel (Aus) **TV umpire** Chris Gaffaney (NZ) **Referee** Ranjan Madugalle (ICC)

Pakistan
Possible
Imam-ul-Haq, Abdullah Shafique, Shan Masood, Babar Azam (c), Saud Shakeel, Salman Agha, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Ali Usman, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Ali, Ubaid Shah
Venue Lord's
Start 11am
TV Sky Sports Cricket
Radio BBC 5 Live Extra

Weather

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Thundery showers Max 24C	Thundery showers Max 23C	Light rain and wind Max 21C	Thundery showers Max 23C	Sunny intervals Max 22C

Over-by-over Follow our coverage live on the web *theguardian.com/cricket*

Analysis
Daniel Gallan

◀ *Dom Bess played his last Test for England in India in March 2021*
GARETH COPLEY/PA

Troubles with spinners is leaving a generation behind – why is there no lasting solution?

It is the eighth over of South Africa's first innings in Gqeberha in January 2020 when Joe Root tosses the ball to 22-year-old Dom Bess. Three overs later, the decision pays off.

With the final ball before drinks, Bess takes a return catch to dismiss Pieter Malan. In the final over before the close, he has Zubayr Hamza caught at short leg. The next morning, Bess removes Dean Elgar, Faf du Plessis and Rassie van der Dussen to become the first English spinner to take the first five wickets of an innings since Derek Underwood in 1975.

It was an improbable breakthrough. Bess had not even been in England's original touring party, arriving after Jack Leach, his Somerset teammate and close friend, fell ill. The previous summer he had struggled for opportunities and gone on loan to Yorkshire. Now he had a Test five-fer and seemingly a place in England's side.

For a while, at least. Bess played another 11 Tests and collected 36 wickets at 33.97. His final Test came against India in Ahmedabad in March 2021. He was 23.

England return to South Africa this winter for three Tests and there is no guarantee they will take a frontline spinner. The recent innings victory against Pakistan was secured with seamers taking all 20 wickets. Tougher challenges await, but there is a growing argument that an extra batter who can turn his arm offers better balance to the side.

Bess is unconvinced. "There's a real difference between filling a gap and properly holding an end up, building pressure and getting wickets," he says, now 29 and entering, as he sees it, "the prime" of his career. "I think the public and the media don't realise how big the gap is between genuine spinners and part-timers."

It is a familiar bind. "You're sort of the first one to be dropped when they need rotation," Bess says. "But then when you go to subcontinent conditions, you're the first two or one to get the job done when it's needed. There's very little security there."

Maybe this says something about the English psyche. Spin requires deception which, perhaps as a hangover from an imperial past, is regarded as faintly ungentlemanly. Or perhaps a culture that values hard work has never trusted a method that can look suspiciously effortless. These are ridiculous theories, of course, but there has to be something more than pitches and scheduling behind English cricket's perennial ambivalence towards spin.

English spinners have often been treated as curiosities. Monty Panesar became as famous for his disastrous Celebrity Mastermind appearance and urinating on a nightclub bouncer as for his 167 Test wickets. Leach became a cult hero for one run at Headingley. Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid have carried a different burden, their faith and British-Asian identities drawing them into conversations about Englishness their white teammates rarely had to navigate.

'You're sort of the first one to be dropped when they need rotation'

Perhaps the English spinner has never been allowed to be just a bowler.

The problem is at least partly structural. In 2022, the England and Wales Cricket Board's high-performance review found that just 22% of deliveries in English domestic first-class cricket since 2014 had been bowled by spinners, the lowest proportion of any major cricket nation. Its conclusion was blunt: "Spinners have limited opportunity to develop in the domestic game."

The Kookaburra ball was introduced into rounds of the County Championship partly to encourage skills marginalised by the more seam-friendly Dukes. Yet counties are asked to develop Test spinners while spending large parts of the season in conditions where they are peripheral.

Bess knows that contradiction. He and Leach emerged at Somerset, one of the few counties prepared to build games around spin, only for the club to receive a 12-point deduction after the pitch used for the 2019 title decider against Essex was judged poor for offering excessive turn.

He describes a merry-go-round in which English cricket identifies a young spinner, backs him, then searches for the next before he has fully developed his trade. Since Graeme Swann retired in 2013 with 255 Test wickets, Ali, Rashid, Leach, Bess and now Shoaib Bashir have all, among others, been presented as the answer.

"Even though I never felt fully settled I did think I'd get a longer run," Bess says. "At least I hoped I would. But I turned 23 and they wanted someone else. The cycle repeats."

There is an irony in English cricket's obsession with youth. Spin is the sport's slow-burning craft. Bess talks about only now understanding how to alter his pace for a surface, how to entice a batter and how to "stack numbers" in his favour over a long spell.

"People forget that Swanny only got into the Test side at 29," Bess says. "Then he played for five or six years in one of the most successful teams we've ever produced."

Bess is 29 now and relishing the prospect of five weeks on dry County Championship pitches. Last week both he and Leach bagged five-fers in victories for Yorkshire and Somerset respectively.

"You'd like to be thinking that some important people are watching," Bess says. Six years after Gqeberha, perhaps they still are.

▼ *Melvine Malard rounds the goalkeeper to put Chelsea 3-2 up*
PATRICK KHACHFE/GETTY IMAGES

Women's Champions League qualifying

Malard breaks duck on debut to move Chelsea close to league phase

Chelsea	**5**
Girma 29, Buurman 54, Malard 67 88, James 74	
Real Sociedad	**2**
Marín 7, Marcos 59	

Suzanne Wrack
Cherry Red Records Stadium

Chelsea's sluggish start in the first leg of their Champions League qualifier against Real Sociedad will have made far from satisfying viewing for their suspended manager, Sonia Bompastor, but two goals from the new signing Melvine Malard contributed to a five-goal haul as the Blues came from behind to give themselves a three-goal cushion going into next week's return fixture.

This summer has been one of change for Chelsea – they welcomed players and fans to the new home of their cup games for the visit of the team which finished third in Liga F last season, swapping Kingsmeadow for the roomier home of AFC Wimbledon. Meanwhile, a squad overhaul has left many curious about what their play will look like this season. For this game too, there was the added blow of being without Bompastor, who served a one-match ban following her red card in Chelsea's quarter-final second leg against Arsenal last season.

Chelsea were rusty at the Cherry Red Records Stadium, their commercially focused pre-season jaunt to New Zealand and Australia not providing the best of preparatory tests prior to the start of the new season.

Their sluggishness was contrasted by Real Sociedad's sharpness and a confidence that was delivered by a 1-1 draw in pre-season with eight-time European champions OL Lyonnes.

The visiting team opened the scoring in style when a corner was cleared to the edge of the box and the forward Ainhoa Marín met it unmarked, sending a looping drive in at the far post. The lead was deserved; the Spanish side were tenacious on the ball and defensively well organised.

Despite looking far from their best, the home team drew level in the 30th minute, when Katie McCabe's corner looked to take the smallest of touches off the captain, Naomi Girma, as it was swept in. Chelsea went close to taking the lead with their next attack, but Aggie Beever-Jones' effort was powered wide.

After the break Chelsea were far better, playing with an energy that implied they had had the riot act read to them, or read it to themselves. Sjoeke Nüsken was flagged offside in their first promising attack of the second half as they began to peg Real Sociedad back.

They were rewarded for their efforts in the 54th minute and it was another set piece that delivered, when Veerle Buurman rose to head in Lauren James' corner.

The joy was short lived, though, with the visiting team pulling level against the run of play. Chelsea were a tad unlucky that Buurman's precise sliding tackle delivered the ball to the feet of an arriving Cecilia Marcos who fired past Hannah Hampton. The Real Sociedad bench erupted and the goalscorer, who suffered back-to-back anterior cruciate ligament injuries in 2021 and 2023, was engulfed by her teammates.

Chelsea's experience, bench and physical superiority shone through, though, and it took the substitute Malard 12 minutes to make her mark on her Chelsea debut as they kept their momentum despite conceding. The France forward collected Nüsken's poked through-ball, sat down a defender and waited coolly for the goalkeeper to commit before rolling the ball into the empty net.

James delivered Chelsea's fourth and gave them a more comfortable lead when she turned in Ellie Carpenter's ball from close range. Carpenter delivered similarly for Malard to get her second as the clock ticked down to put the hosts a step closer to the league phase.

Chelsea	Real Sociedad
4-3-3	**4-3-3**
Hampton; Carpenter, Girma (Bronze 65), Buurman, McCabe; James (Hamano 76), Walsh, Nüsken; Thompson, Beever-Jones (Malard 55), Baltimore (Kaptein 55)	Arrula; Camino, N Aparicio, Claudia Florentino, Vicente; Campo (Laborde 76), Cahynova, Fernández; A Aparicio (Isasisasmendi 90), Marín (Eizagirre 76), Marcos (Egiguren 70)

Referee Silvia Gasperotti (It)

Chelsea offered Martínez as Villa agree £65m Jackson fee

Sam Cunningham
Jacob Steinberg

Chelsea have been offered Emiliano Martínez and are considering a bid for the goalkeeper. The club are in talks with Martínez's camp, and are also braced for a bid from Manchester City for the World Cup winner's Argentina teammate Enzo Fernández.

Martínez has told Aston Villa he wants to leave but a move to Juventus collapsed last week after Villa had signed his replacement, Zion Suzuki, from Parma for £30m.

Goalkeeper has been a problematic position for Chelsea in recent seasons, with Robert Sánchez mainly the No 1 but prone to mistakes. Mike Penders, 21, is being lined up to become the first-choice, but the Chelsea manager, Xabi Alonso, selected Sánchez for Monday's win against Fulham when two Sánchez errors led to goals.

The availability of Martínez has intrigued Chelsea and they are mulling whether it is too good an opportunity to turn down. The 33-year-old is a serial trophy winner. He won the World Cup in 2022 and reached the 2026 final. He also lifted the Europa League with Villa last season and the FA Cup with Arsenal in 2020.

Martínez was not in the squad for Villa's heavy opening-weekend defeat at Brighton. Marco Bizot started in goal with Suzuki on the bench. Martínez joining Chelsea may solve a problem for both clubs.

Chelsea and Villa, meanwhile, have agreed a £65m deal for striker Nicolas Jackson to join the Midlands club.

The Senegal international was also a target for Atlético Madrid but is poised to join Villa as a replacement for Ollie Watkins, who is expected to join the Saudi Pro League side Al-Hilal for a £50m fee. Villa also want a centre-back and may target West Ham's Jean-Clair Todibo.

▲ *Emíliano Martínez has told Aston Villa he wants to leave this summer*

City are expected to make an offer for Fernández and any deal would leave Chelsea seeking a replacement before Tuesday night's transfer deadline. Chelsea previously told City to pay £120m by 14 August or miss out, but the midfielder remains a priority target for City's manager, Enzo Maresca, who he worked with at Chelsea. Alonso started Reece James and Roméo Lavia in central midfield at Fulham, introducing Fernández from the bench.

City continued their midfield rebuild yesterday by buying Ayyoub Bouaddi from Lille in a €100m (£85.7m) deal and selling Nico González to Newcastle for £52m.

Alonso wants Fernández to stay but Chelsea are preparing for the possibility he departs.

Alonso said every player would be treated the same while at the club. Fernández is training with the first team and available for matches. "They are not new to this," he said of his squad. "They know how to do it, how to deal with it. We never talk about these things. We try to deal with them positively."

Grealish and Paixão on Sunderland's shopping list

Louise Taylor
Jamie Jackson
Will Unwin

Sunderland are exploring a potential loan move for Jack Grealish, but formal negotiations with Manchester City are yet to take place.

For the moment sources say the former England winger remains one of a number of "players of interest" on Régis Le Bris's transfer window shortlist, with Sunderland's manager also keen on Igor Paixão of Marseille.

It is possible that Sunderland could acquire both Paixão and Grealish, although a deal for the latter would involve a degree of haggling about the percentage of Grealish's wages – believed to total £300,000 a week – that Sunderland would be willing to pay. With the 30-year-old out of contract at City next summer, any loan agreement would almost certainly include an option to buy.

Grealish is understood to be open to a move to Wearside. The winger spent much of last season sidelined by injury during a loan stint at Everton, and has recently been spotted in the north-east with Jordan Pickford.

▲ *Winger Jack Grealish is reportedly open to a loan move to Sunderland*

The pair struck up a friendship during Grealish's time on Merseyside and Pickford, a former Sunderland goalkeeper, delighted in showing his friend a few favourite haunts.

Nottingham Forest are in talks over the €15m (£12.8m) signing of the Celta Vigo right-back Javi Rueda which would probably be their final move of the window after signing Liam Delap from Chelsea.

Oliver Glasner has been seeking someone who can play right wing-back and the 24-year-old former Real Madrid academy player fits the desired profile.

Chelsea have agreed to sell Delap to Forest in a deal worth £50m and have loaned Axel Disasi to Crystal Palace for the season. Disasi has also been loaned out to Aston Villa and West Ham since he signed for Chelsea from Monaco.

Coventry have signed the Brentford defender Ethan Pinnock for an undisclosed fee. The 33-year-old will add experience to the Sky Blues' back line as they aim to stay in the Premier League this season.

Ismaïla Sarr and Jean-Philippe Mateta could both remain at Crystal Palace, their manager Pierre Sage has claimed. Sarr has been linked with a move away from Selhurst Park, with Liverpool reportedly tabling a £50m offer.

Asked if he expects the Senegalese to stay, Sage replied: "For the moment, yes, because when you have three years on the contract, it is not easy to leave."

Mateta also faces an uncertain future but Sage added: "He has the behaviour of someone who is happy to be here, who wants to be here and is prepared to be here all season. I don't see a player who has a problem with the club or with us."

Sterling charged with dangerous driving after crash

Raheem Sterling has been charged with dangerous driving and possession of nitrous oxide after a crash involving a Lamborghini on the motorway, police have said.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight constabulary said the charges followed a single-vehicle collision on the M3 southbound, near Minley interchange, on 28 May. The 31-year-old former England forward is accused of dangerous driving, possession of nitrous oxide for wrongful inhalation and failing to provide a specimen.

The force said no other vehicles were involved in the collision and no injuries were reported. Sterling is due to appear at Basingstoke magistrates court for a hearing on 15 September.

He scored 20 goals in 82 appearances for England, helping the side to reach the 2018 World Cup semi-finals and the Euro 2020 final. Sterling came through the academy at QPR before joining Liverpool, and moved in 2015 to Manchester City. He left for Chelsea in 2022 and spent the 2024-25 season on loan at Arsenal. After leaving Stamford Bridge, he joined the Dutch club Feyenoord on a short-term deal until the end of last season. He is now without a club. **PA Media**

▲ *Raheem Sterling is without a club after leaving Feyenoord this summer*

◀ *Ayyoub Bouaddi, who represented France at youth level, passed his exams a year early and has a passion for chess*
MANCHESTER CITY FC

The €100m teenager: a 'beautiful person' aiming to emulate City legend Rodri

Ayyoub Bouaddi's maturity and intelligence mark him out as a rare talent with big shoes to fill at the Etihad

Will Unwin

'He's like a computer," the former Lille head of academy recruitment, Mathieu Frison, says of the €100m (£85.7m) Manchester City recruit Ayyoub Bouaddi. "You teach him something, he learns it and can do it immediately." Bouaddi has the mountainous challenge at his new club of replacing the world's best central midfielder. It would be difficult for anyone but at 18 it feels monumental, although those who know the Morocco international best would not bet against him.

Bouaddi has known only Lille and Ligue 1 but is entering one of the biggest clubs in the world where a season without a trophy is deemed a failure. For someone so young, however, he has plenty of experience. He made his European debut three days after his 16th birthday and has played three full seasons in the first team, culminating in a place at the World Cup this summer.

At 13, Lille beat off competition from France's elite to sign Bouaddi, after showing his parents the pathway he could follow to the first team. There was never lengthy discussion over money, just what would be best for a boy who wanted to reach the highest level. Lille's track record is impressive, the club bringing through Bouaddi's soon-to-be Premier League rivals Carlos Baleba and Leny Yoro, among others, in recent times.

Frison visited the Bouaddi family in Creil, an hour north of Paris, to explain why a move to Lille would be beneficial after scouts spotted Bouaddi playing for his home town team in a tournament. "He was not here at the beginning of the meeting with his parents, and he came in the house with the ball on a string," Frison recalls. "He did a very good trick; he always had this ball in his hand and he always played in his house, so he was already very talented technically."

City have faith in him, although plenty of the expenditure is based on promise rather than a finished article. He is not someone who creates highlight reels, but does the dirty work and plays for the team. Others may have sought someone with more miles in their legs, but Enzo Maresca is rebuilding a midfield for the long term after Rodri's departure for Barcelona and with a £52m deal agreed for Nico González to join Newcastle. The 23-year-old Elliot Anderson arrived from Nottingham Forest as the first cog in the machine, and Enzo Fernández is also wanted by his former manager at Chelsea.

Bouaddi, the only boy of four siblings, passed all his exams a year early, is studying for a mathematics degree remotely and speaks English. He is a deep thinker, someone able to cut out the distractions at home and on the pitch. "On the bus, while everyone is watching YouTube videos or listening to music, he will play chess for one or two hours," Frison says. "In the evening when all the players played Fifa or were on their phones, he studied mathematics, physics, science. His parents didn't need to push him to do this - he wanted to learn."

'Very comfortable technically, he is always in the right position. And he's a charming boy'

Bouaddi represented the country of his birth, France, from under-16 to under-21 and is regarded as a huge loss for *Les Bleus*. "Bouaddi, for me, is one of the smartest players I've known in my coaching career," says the former France under-18 coach Landry Chauvin, who had Bouaddi in his squad for the Lafarge tournament in Limoges in 2024. "He reminds me a lot of Yoann Gourcuff, who I saw in Rennes a few years ago. As soon as the tournament was over, I told *Les Espoirs* [France's Under-21s] that he should have nothing more to do with me, that he had to continue to progress and go above and beyond."

Rodri has won everything worth winning over the past decade while Bouaddi was growing up. Emulating the Spaniard will not be straightforward for a player who is a long way from being fully developed. "When Maresca asks him to do something tactically, he knows that 100% Ayyoub will take the best position for the team," Frison says.

"He will respect the game model with intensity, even when he is tired; he will respect the process. Everyone wants a player who can make the difference individually because they can help you to win the game but you need reliable players who you can trust 100% during 60 games of the season. And Ayyoub, he's this kind of player."

Bouaddi has consistently mixed with - and surpassed - older players, quickly improving as he rapidly went through each step to the top. He was 16 when he featured for Chauvin's France Under-18s and on his 17th birthday he faced Real Madrid in the Champions League, playing 90 minutes in a 1-0 win against Jude Bellingham et al.

"A very intelligent boy who adapts quickly, capable of playing in every position in the middle, capable of evolving in a changing environment, permanently working hard, but also always with his head held high," Chauvin says. "He has the ability to scan the actions very quickly, to take the information before the others. Very comfortable technically, he always has the right position on the field. And on top of that, he's a boy who's charming in everyday life; very respectful, very well educated, who knows all the rules.

"The man who hides behind the footballer is simply a very beautiful person. Every time I went to Lille, I would send him a little text, and immediately he came to greet me, even though he was already a pro. Many in his place would have snubbed the under-18 coach, but not Ayyoub."

City swoop for Bouaddi as Marmoush exits for Spurs

Jamie Jackson
David Hytner

Manchester City have confirmed the signing of Ayyoub Bouaddi from Lille for €95m (£81.4m) plus €5m, with the 18-year-old midfielder agreeing a five-year contract.

Bouaddi's arrival comes after City struck deals to loan Omar Marmoush to Tottenham for the season, with an obligation to buy for an initial £50m, and sell Nico González to Newcastle for £52m.

Bouaddi has experienced a rapid rise after becoming Lille's youngest player in October 2023, three days after his 16th birthday. The Morocco international becomes the most expensive teenager signed by an English club.

González yesterday became the fourth frontline central midfielder to depart City this summer after completing his move to Newcastle. The Spanish 24-year-old will wear No 6 at his new club and becomes the seventh senior addition to the Newcastle squad this summer.

González joins fellow midfielders Rodri, Bernardo Silva and Tijjani Reijnders in moving on from the Etihad Stadium. City have added Bouaddi and Elliot Anderson, a £116m buy from Nottingham Forest, and are expected to firm up their interest in Chelsea's Enzo Fernández by making a bid. The west London club value the midfielder at £120m.

Marmoush is to have a medical at Spurs, who have agreed to pay up to £10m in add-ons, with half of that guaranteed. Next summer the 27-year-old is to sign a four-year contract with a one-year option.

City are not due to give a sell-on fee to Eintracht Frankfurt, from whom they bought the Egyptian in January 2025. Marmoush is following Sávio in leaving City for Spurs, who bought the Brazilian winger in a deal worth £75m plus £10m on Tuesday. City have agreed a £34m fee for Palmeiras's Allan Elias, who is to be Sávio's replacement as a wide forward.

The Spurs manager, Roberto De Zerbi, has been keen to bolster his options at centre-forward and Marmoush represents an upgrade on Dominic Solanke and Richarlison.

Spurs have spent £304.5m this summer on Jan Paul van Hecke, Sandro Tonali, Mateus Fernandes and Sávio. They have added Martin Dubravka, Andy Robertson and Marcos Senesi on free transfers.

▲ *Spanish midfielder Nico González has joined Newcastle for £52m*

Sharp shooting sets Spurs on the way

Dominic Solanke displays textbook technique to double Tottenham's advantage

SIMON DAEL/ TOTTENHAM/ SHUTTERSTOCK

Sávio savours debut goal as Tottenham coast to victory

Tottenham	**5**
Moore 41, Solanke 45, Danso 67, Sávio 82, Davies 85	
Charlton	**1**
Jones 87	

David Hytner
Tottenham Hotspur Stadium

A new season at the snazziest modern stadium in England and something extremely welcome for Tottenham. A home win over domestic opposition. There were only four of them last season; three in the Premier League with the final one - over Everton on the last day - helping them to avoid relegation. Had they lost that, this Carabao Cup fixture against Charlton would also have been played in the Championship.

Spurs needed this tonic for another reason - to begin the clean-up operation after Saturday's awful 3-0 defeat at Brentford. The season could not have started any worse. With no European football, a decent cup run or runs are imperative and Spurs got themselves up and running in this competition.

For a good while, it looked as though Mikey Moore was going to be the headline act. The homegrown 19-year-old broke the deadlock with a vicious drive from the edge of the area; it was the purity of the strike that made it. But then came Sávio.

Spurs were 3-0 up with further goals from Dominic Solanke and the substitute, Kevin Danso, when Roberto Di Zerbi sent on his £75m signing from Manchester City for his debut. It would be a devastating cameo from Sávio, something to wet the whistle for bigger challenges ahead.

It took him just 11 minutes to score and it was a lovely goal - a glide inside from the right and a fizzing low shot into the near corner. There was more. Sávio once again showcased his skills when slicing inside, putting one Charlton defender down with a feint and getting away from another. The shot hit his teammate, Ben Davies, and went in.

Charlton would have the last word when another substitute, Lloyd Jones, headed home from a corner. They deserved a goal. The major takeaway was the sense of possibility brought by Sávio.

De Zerbi has been honest about how his team have not been ready to start the Premier League season - a result of injuries, players returning late from the World Cup and a pre-season tour to New Zealand and Australia that was sub-optimal.

The manager started Destiny Udogie, Rodrigo Bentancur, Mateus Fernandes and Solanke, players that were fit enough only for the bench at Brentford. Pedro Porro and Micky van de Ven, who did not kick a ball in pre-season and were not available to face Brentford, were among the substitutes.

De Zerbi's idea was not to take chances. Whereas his Charlton counterpart, Nathan Jones, seemed to see it as a free hit. He made 10 changes to the team that he sent out for Saturday's win at West Ham, which made it two Championship victories out of two for the season. Preston at home on Saturday was the priority.

Mikey Moore's sweet strike puts Spurs in front

The 6,000 travelling Charlton fans were determined to make themselves heard - even more so after their team lost both of their centre-halves, Collins Sichenje and Billy Koumetio, to injuries in the 15th minute. Sichenje was taken off on a stretcher.

Spurs were always going to dominate the ball. The question concerned what they could create with it. The answer at the outset was very little. De Zerbi's starting shape was 4-3-3, Bentancur in the No 6 role flanked by Lucas Bergvall and Fernandes. Spurs did not threaten until the 30th minute when Solanke had a shot blocked and Archie Gray extended the goalkeeper, Tiernan Brooks, with a low prod on the rebound.

Charlton might have been in front by then. Greg Docherty exploded a drive through a crowd that Antonin Kinsky did well to save, and Nathan Asiimwe headed narrowly off target.

Spurs upped the tempo after the Brooks save from Gray. Fernandes was good. There was a flicker from Mikey Moore, even if the end product was not there. Then it was. Gloriously. When Moore moved inside from the right, the Charlton player close to him - Millenic Alli - slipped. Moore knew what he had to do and the sweetness of the left-footed connection took the breath. The shot ripped through the hands of Brooks. The power was too much.

What Charlton did not need shortly afterwards was hesitant defending inside their box on a bouncing ball. Bergvall saw a shot blocked and Timothy Ouma seemed to freeze. When it broke for Solanke, he swept a clinical finish into the bottom corner.

Moore's only other goal for Spurs was against Elfsborg in the Europa League in January 2025. After that game, his teammate, James Maddison, compared him to Neymar. Moore's career trajectory has maybe not been as steep as once envisaged but he remains young. He wanted to do more in the second half and there was a swagger about him on the ball.

The Solanke goal took the sting out of the occasion. Spurs could relax after the interval. It was attack v defence; the question now whether they would score more. Gray worked Brooks again.

De Zerbi introduced Porro, Van de Ven and Danso. It was some entrance from the latter, his first touch a header past Brooks from Fernandes's free-kick. He was bloodied into the bargain, caught in the aerial challenge by the Charlton substitute, Danny McNamara.

Sávio stood and watched, stripped and ready. When he entered the fray, he made his mark.

Tottenham	Charlton
4-3-3	**4-2-3-1**
Kinsky; Gray, Van Hecke (Van de Ven 65), Davies, Udogie (Porro 65); Bergvall, Bentancur (Danso 65), Fernandes; Moore, Solanke (Sávio 71), Tel (Williams-Barnett 78)	Brooks; Asiimwe, Sichenje (McNamara 15), Koumetio (Jones 15), Mesik; Ouma (Mwamba 66), Docherty, Apter, Knibbs (Leaburn 66), Alli (Rankin-Costello 66); Mbick
Subs not used	*Subs not used*
Dubravka, Robertson, Gallagher, Richarlison	Okonkwo, Coventry, Carey, Tagoe

Referee Adam Herczeg

Barnes doubles up to settle thriller and seal Jaissle's first win

Newcastle 3
Touré 38, Barnes 48 81

West Brom 2
Price 19 77pen

Louise Taylor
St James' Park

Around this time last week Matthias Jaissle spoke of his "disappointment" at the "negativity" surrounding a transitional young Newcastle side.

Fast forward seven days and a team slightly unlucky to have been held to a draw at home by Liverpool on Sunday have now provided Jaissle with his first competitive win since replacing Eddie Howe as head coach.

Granted Newcastle's passage to the third round of the Carabao Cup was not entirely smooth and entailed coming from behind to see off a very decent and extremely determined West Brom, but it appears that Jaissle's faith was fully justified.

It helps that he has been able to sign the £30m right-back Amar Dedic from Benfica. Dedic, who played for the German at RB Salzburg, shone here with his crosses creating one of Harvey Barnes's two goals and another for Bazoumana Touré.

Ten minutes before kick-off Nico González, Newcastle's new £52m signing from Manchester City, walked on to the pitch and was introduced to the crowd. As the stadium echoed to chants of "Nico, Nico," the Spanish holding midfielder beamed broadly.

When González's new head coach, Jaissle, first talked to Newcastle executives about succeeding Howe at the end of July, part of their pitch involved a video of 300,000 fans packing the city centre as Howe's team brought the 2025 Carabao Cup back to Tyneside. "They tried to convince me with that footage," said Jaissle. "But it was not needed."

The German's hopes of lifting the trophy himself next spring were dented as West Brom took a 19th-minute lead. Although a fairly strong Newcastle XI had started brightly with Joe Willock in particular using his deployment behind Nick Woltemade in the No 10 role to stretch James Morrison's defence, West Brom gradually assumed control.

With Ousmane Diakité establishing himself as a key midfield combatant, the Championship side grew increasingly confident. When they won a free-kick, Isaac Price curled that 25-yard dead ball around the wall and beat Ewen Jaouen at his near post.

Jaissle's second-choice goalkeeper, a 20-year-old Frenchman signed from Ligue 2 Reims, got a hand to the ball and arguably should have saved it but the 2,000 West Brom fans perched high in the Leazes End were not complaining.

Morrison's team had impressed while winning their first two games this season and, for a while at least, his fluid version of 4-4-2 seemed to be confusing Newcastle and subduing the recalled Woltemade.

Then the 18-year-old Sean Steur - culpable of conceding the foul preceding free kick - began re-asserting himself in the home anchoring role. The former Ajax midfielder's fine run and pass permitted Dedic to whip in a brilliant cross that Touré lashed in from close range.

As Jaissle raised a celebratory fist he could reflect that three recent arrivals - Steur, Dedic and Touré had combined seamlessly for that equaliser. As Touré, a Côte d'Ivoire left winger signed from Hoffenheim to replace Anthony Gordon, celebrated his first goal for Newcastle it appeared to confirm that there really might be life at St James' Park after Gordon, Sandro Tonali and Bruno Guimarães.

Touré was replaced by Barnes at half-time and the substitute wasted no time in reminding Jaissle that he is far from a shabby left winger either. Three minutes into the second period Barnes gave Newcastle the lead after pouncing on the fallout from a corner and firing the ball home.

Willock might have extended the home advantage but miscued with his left foot while Price would surely have equalised had his goal-bound shot not been blocked.

Such fatigue only intensified when the once again electric Yoane Wissa replaced Willock. But then Lewis Hall handled in the area, Price stepped forward to beat Jaouen from the penalty spot and Morrison's players briefly located a second wind.

Extra time beckoned but Barnes, a former West Brom loanee, was not about to be eclipsed by Price and duly swept another fine cross from the excellent Dedic beyond Matt Ingram.

Newcastle	West Brom
4-2-3-1	4-4-2
Jaouen; Dedic, Thiaw, Botman, Hall; Steur (Miley 65), Ramsey; Murphy (Elanga 65), Willock (Wissa 65), Touré (Barnes ht); Woltemade	Ingram; Williams, Mepham, Campbell, Townsend; Whitwell (Bany 80), Nzingoula (Styles 71), Diakité (Molumby 71), Price (Bostock 80); Stewart, Morgan (Horn Myhre 71)
Subs not used	*Subs not used*
Hornicek, Schär, Bamba, Shahar, Neave	O'Leary, Phillips, Galves, Crowther

Referee Bobby Madley **Attendance** 51,405

▲ *The half-time substitute Harvey Barnes spares Newcastle's blushes*

◀ *Thierno Barry fires Everton into a first-half lead from Vitalii Mykolenko's square pass* MICHAEL REGAN/ GETTY IMAGES

Reborn Barry fires hat-trick for electric Everton

Preston 0

Everton 4
Barry 25 59 70, Johnson 72

Andy Hunter
Deepdale

Thierno Barry resembled a striker reborn, and the goalscorer David Moyes desperately needs, as the first hat-trick of his Everton career plus an assist for new signing Brennan Johnson delivered a resounding win for the Scot on his competitive return to Preston.

The France international scored eight times in a difficult debut season in royal blue but has half that amount just two games into this fledgling campaign. Barry followed up his header against Crystal Palace with a predator's hat-trick to give Moyes a comfortable, convincing win back at the club he left for Everton in 2002.

Before the tie Moyes attracted accusations of a lack of ambition - the kind that has contributed to the longest trophy drought in Everton's history at 31 years - with a spiky response to being asked how important cup competitions are this season. "I'll ask you the question," he replied. "Is winning a cup more important than staying in the Premier League? What would your answer be?" That a club of Everton's stature should not have to choose between league survival and cup success.

The Everton manager could not be accused of treating the Carabao Cup lightly on the evidence of his team selection at Deepdale, where only Jarrad Branthwaite and Tyrique George were missing from the side that started the opening day win over Crystal Palace. Paul Heckingbottom, by contrast, made seven changes from the Preston team beaten by Wolves on Saturday.

Everton's approach mirrored Moyes's intent. The visitors dominated from the start with Preston struggling to establish a foothold in the game. Harrison Armstrong received a warm reception on his return to the club where he spent a fruitful spell on loan last season and, as against Palace, produced another accomplished display in the heart of Everton's midfield. The 19-year-old's sharp touches and movement, alongside that of Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall, stretched the Championship defence repeatedly.

Dewsbury-Hall engineered a fine breakthrough with a beautifully weighted pass over the Preston defence to Vitalii Mykolenko. The Everton left-back's neat control gave him time to assess his options and he squared across the penalty area for Barry to convert his second goal of the season with ease.

Preston's threat was virtually non-existent in the first half but they were presented with a rare opportunity when Merlin Rohl allowed a ball to slide under his foot. Delano Burgzorg seized on the loose ball and teed up Leo Leroy inside the box, only for the new signing to blaze over.

Tyler Dibling was handed his first start since Everton's FA Cup third round exit in January and came close to doubling the visitors' lead with a snap-shot that Lee Nicholls saved well. The Preston goalkeeper also denied Dewsbury-Hall from an Everton counterattack early in the second half.

There was more aggression and less deference from the home side after the restart but, just as Deepdale found hope, Barry extinguished it with his second goal of the night. Dewsbury-Hall was heavily involved again, exchang ing passes with Iliman Ndiaye on the left before stinging Nicholls's palms with an angled drive. The rebound fell kindly for the in-rushing Barry, who converted from point-blank range.

Barry completed his hat-trick with a tap-in at the far post from Johnson's selfless cross before returning the favour with a defence-splitting pass that the Everton substitute slid under the exposed Preston keeper.

Preston	Everton
4-2-3-1	4-2-3-1
Nicholls; Valentin, Storey, Gibson, Vukcevic; Leroy (Devine 61), Thompson; Small (McCann 60; Gryba 85), Moran, Burgzorg (Clarke 61); Erabi (Lang 60)	Pickford; Rohl, Tarkowski, Keane, Mykolenko; Armstrong, Garner (Johnson 64); Dibling (Patterson 64), Dewsbury-Hall (Alcaraz 81), Ndiaye (George 81); Barry (Aznou 82)
Subs not used	*Subs not used*
Iversen, Lindsay, Hughes, Nolan	Travers, Beto, O'Brien, Foster

Referee Tony Harrington **Attendance** 16,834

Results

Football

CARABAO EFL CUP
Second round

Bradford (Bradford won 4-2 on pens)	(0) **0**	**Burnley** 19,686	(0) **0**
Newcastle Touré 38 Barnes 48 81	(1) **3**	**West Brom** Price 19 77pen 51,405	(1) **2**
Tottenham Moore 41, Solanke 45 Danso 67, Sávio 82, Davies 85	(2) **5**	**Charlton** Jones 87 49,008	(0) **1**
Preston 16,834	(0) **0**	**Everton** Barry 25 59 70 Johnson 72	(1) **4**

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Playoffs: Second leg AEK Athens 4 Levski Sofia 0 (agg 4-0); Celje L Slovan Bratislava L (agg 1-1); Lyon 1 Fenerbahce 2 (agg 2-3); Viking 3 Dinamo Zagreb 1 (agg 5-3)

CONFERENCE LEAGUE
Playoffs: Second leg Rapid Vienna 2 Hearts 2 (aet; agg 4-4; Hearts won 4-3 on pens)

WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Third qualifying round: First leg

Chelsea Girma 29, Buurman 54 Malard 67 88, James 74	(1) **5**	**Real Sociedad** Marín 7 Marcos 58	(1) **2**

Ajax 0 Real Madrid 2; Czarni Sosnowiec 1 OH Leuven 4; Eintracht Frankfurt 1 Paris Saint-Germain 1; PSV 0 Køge 1; St Pölten 0 Juventus 3; Sparta Praha 3 Servette Chênois 2; Wolfsburg 2 Internazionale 0

METRO BANK ONE DAY CUP WOMEN
Ampleforth Yorkshire 171. Surrey 172-8 (KM Chathli 66 no). Surrey beat Yorkshire by two wickets.

Edgbaston The Blaze 282-7 (O Prendergast 69, GA Elwiss 57; IECM Wong 5-58). Warwickshire 212 (KL George 89, BM Halliday 52; LF Higham 4-41). The Blaze beat Warwickshire by 70 runs.

Taunton Durham 248-9 (EK Marlow 71; E Anderson 5-40). Somerset 251-7 (CE Dean 76, NF Holland 70). Somerset beat Durham by three wickets.

Utila Bowl Hampshire 223 (AEM Norgrove 70 no, FG Kemp 61; KL Cross 4-33). Lancashire 224-6 (EL Lamb 68). Lancashire beat Hampshire by four wickets.

Cricket

SECOND MEN'S TEST (fourth day of five)
Colombo India 503-9 dec (D Padikkal 117, DC Jurel 115 no, RR Pant 63, S Gill 50; AM Fernando 4-106). Sri Lanka 290 (GS Dinusha 103, DPS Sooriyabandara 80) & 229-6 (DPS Sooriyabandara 92, PHKD Mendis 55). Sri Lanka lead India by 16 runs with four second-innings wickets remaining.

Tennis

WTA ABIERTO MONTERREY (Mexico)
Women: Singles: Second round: D Parry (Fr) bt O Oliynykova (Ukr) 6-4 7-6 (3); **N Bartunkova** (Cz) bt Liang ES (Tai) 6-7 (4) 7-5 6-4

Cycling

VUELTA A ESPAÑA (Spain)
Stage 5 (Falset Costa Daurada - Roquetes Terres de l'Ebre (173.4km): **1** M Brennan (GB) Visma | Lease a Bike 3hr 47min 2sec; **2** J Meeus (Bel) Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe; **3** V Albanese (It) EF Education-EasyPost. **Selected others: 28** B Tulett (GB) Visma | Lease a Bike

Overall standings: 1 T Pogacar (Svn) UAE Team Emirates-XRG 11:26:01; **2** P Roglic (Svn) Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe +3:21; **3** E Mas (Sp) Movistar +3:32. **Selected others: 5** O Onley (GB) Netcompany Ineos +3:45; **19** B Tulett (GB) Visma | Lease a Bike +8:44; **25** F Pickering (GB) Jayco-AlUla +9:54

Snooker

WST WUHAN OPEN (China)
Second round: Chang B (Chn) bt A Carter (Eng) 5-2; **J Trump** (Eng) bt Si J (Chn) 5-1; **R O'Sullivan** (Eng) bt S Maguire (Sco) 5-2; **M Selby** (Eng) bt Pang J (Chn) 5-4; **Zhao X** (Chn) bt B Hawkins (Eng) 5-2; **M Williams** (Wal) bt D Wells (Wal) 5-2; **N Robertson** (Aus) bt L Davies (Wal) 5-3; **Xiao G** (Chn) bt C Wakelin (Eng) 5-3

Fixtures

Football (6pm unless stated)
Europa League
Playoffs: First leg AGF (1) v Benfica (3) (7pm); Anderlecht (3) v Kairat (0) (7.30pm); Ararat-Armenia (1) v Universitatea Craiova (1) (5pm); CSKA Sofia (0) v OFI (3) (7pm); Ferencvaros (1) v Trabzonspor (0) (7.30pm); Iberia 1999 (0) v Jagiellonia (4) (5pm); Kauno Zalgiris (0) v Besiktas (3); Lillestrøm (0) v Egnatia (0); Omonia (0) v Sint-Truiden (1); Red Bull Salzburg (1) v Mjällby (0); Thun (0) v Lech Poznan (7) (7pm); Viktoria (0) v Red Star Belgrade (3)
Conference League
Playoffs: Second leg *(selected)* Brighton (0) v Tromsø (0) (7.30pm); Freiburg (3) v Motherwell (1) (5.45pm); Hibernian (0) v Gent (0) (8pm); Jablonec (0) v Rangers (1) (5pm); Larne (2) v Lincoln Red Imps (0) (8pm)
Carabao EFL Cup
Second round Chelsea v Luton (7.30m); Fulham v AFC Wimbledon (8pm)
Enterprise National League
Boreham Wood v Boston (7.45pm)

Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Wigan v Hull KR (8pm)

Cricket (11am unless stated)
Second Men's Test (first day of five)
England v Pakistan, Lord's
Rothesay County Championship
Division One Essex v Surrey, Chelmsford; Glamorgan v Hants, Sophia Gardens; Sussex v Somerset, Hove; Warks v Notts, Edgbaston; Yorkshire v Leicestershire, Scarborough
Division Two Derbyshire v Middlesex, Derby; Durham v Gloucs, Banks Homes Riverside; Northamptonshire v Kent, Northampton; Worcestershire v Lancashire, New Road

Greg Wood's racing tips

Carlisle 2.00 Jewel Maker **2.30** Mehmas Star **3.00** Ten Clarets (nap) **3.30** Rogue Attraction (nb) **4.00** Crafty Spirit **4.30** Riddikulus **5.00** Idyllic
Lingfield 2.22 No More Pino **2.52** Please Don't Go **3.22** Black Chiffon **3.52** Isle Of Lismore **4.22** Freedom Bay **4.55** Royal County Glory
Ffos Las 2.37 Tango Hotel **3.07** Tumishi **3.37** Demetris Mouflon **4.07** Lusaka **4.37** Winday **5.07** Grand Pier
Newton Abbot 4.42 St Just In Time **5.12** Premier Fantasy **5.42** Buxted Reel **6.12** Gore Point **6.42** My Girl Katie **7.12** It's A Breeze **7.42** Donnie Azoff
Southwell 6.00 Heretic **6.30** Shades Of May **7.00** Dublin Bay **7.30** Market Leader **8.00** Statten Island **8.30** Crypto Quest **9.00** Captain Cairney

The Guardian
Thursday
27 August
2026

35

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Sport

Dream debut
Malard double as Chelsea hit five against Real Sociedad

Page 40 →

Moving day
Bouaddi in, González and Marmoush out at City

Page 41 →

Sávio makes instant impact in Spurs stroll

Tottenham	Charlton
5	1

New Tottenham signing Sávio scored on his debut just 11 minutes after coming off the bench
Carabao Cup *Page 42 →*

RICHARD HEATHCOTE/GETTY IMAGES

Alleged assault connected to Carse arrest investigated

Matt Hughes

Derbyshire police are investigating an alleged assault in connection with the arrest of Brydon Carse last weekend, which led to the Durham fast bowler being dropped from the England squad for the second Test against Pakistan.

Carse was filmed by a member of the public in handcuffs outside Molly Malone's Irish Tavern in Derby in the early hours of Sunday morning with several other Durham players, including the former England captain Ben Stokes, also present.

Derbyshire police confirmed on Monday that Carse had briefly been detained on suspicion of "being drunk and disorderly" before being "de-arrested", but the Guardian has been told that their investigation remains live.

In a statement released yesterday, first reported by the Telegraph, Derbyshire police said they are investigating allegations of assault. "We are investigating allegations of assault in Derby city centre," the statement read. "No arrests have yet been made and the investigation is ongoing."

It is unclear at this stage whether Carse had any involvement in the alleged assault, but the revelation that the arrest may have involved more than a row over a spilled drink will intensify the spotlight on England's cricketers following a torrid few months dominated by headlines involving late-night misbehaviour.

As previously reported by the Guardian, the phone footage of Carse was filmed after he was denied re-entry to the bar shortly before closing time at around 4am on Sunday.

Carse will remain unavailable pending the outcome of an inquiry by the Cricket Regulator, but with the police still investigating that process has yet to begin so he could face a lengthy exile.

Second Test preview *Pages 38-39 →*

▲ *Brydon Carse has been dropped from the England squad this week*

Boycott averted
Uefa to drop threat after Fifa promises no World Cup sale

Exclusive
Nick Ames
Matt Hughes

Uefa is to drop its threatened boycott of Fifa competitions after receiving concrete guarantees that the global governing body will never attempt a repeat of Gianni Infantino's plan to sell stakes in the World Cup.

European teams have been cleared for participation in the upcoming Under-20 Women's World Cup, along with subsequent tournaments, after Fifa provided the binding assurances that no equivalent of its president's ill-fated scheme will be put on the table.

Uefa had threatened the boycott after Infantino's Fifa Forward Enterprise proposal was revealed and doubled down after it was withdrawn, saying the condition that "such attempts to disfigure the game in this way will never be made again" had not been met.

Despite exchanging barbs in public, Uefa and Fifa are understood to have been having private discussions over the terms of removing the boycott threat for several weeks, with the European governing body finally getting the reassurances it required.

When Fifa confirmed its decision to abandon FFE four days after it became public it neglected to pledge that a similar privatisation plan would not be repeated, but it has now done so in private correspondence.

The decision to drop the boycott allows England, who named their squad for the under-20 tournament last week, to travel to Poland in time for the opening game against Canada on 5 September. France and Spain had also listed their travelling party in anticipation that the boycott threat would be lifted. Portugal, Italy and the host nation are the other European countries due to compete.

▲ *Uefa's stance that Gianni Infantino must be replaced has not changed*

Fifa welcomed the end of the boycott yesterday, saying: "Fifa is pleased that all qualified teams will be participating in the upcoming Fifa Under-20 Women's World Cup. Fifa strongly believes that football has the power to unite, even in challenging circumstances, and looks forward to welcoming all teams and players to Poland."

The boycott is yet to be publicly dropped by Uefa, whose executive committee and federation chiefs meet in Monte Carlo today.

Uefa's position that Infantino must be replaced has not changed and further steps regarding its stance towards the Fifa leadership will also be discussed at the meeting.

Italy's football federation (FIGC) yesterday became the latest to publicly withdraw support for Infantino.